

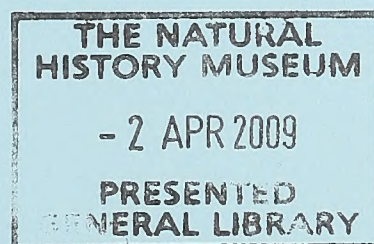
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JOURNAL


2008

March 2009



EDINBURGH NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY
COUNCIL
at January 2009



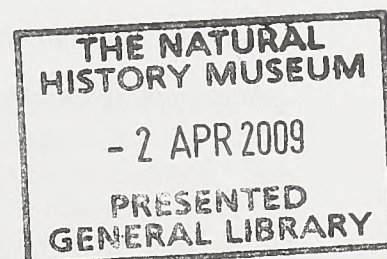
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The Edinburgh Natural History Society was originally founded in 1869 and incorporates the Edinburgh Field Naturalists and Microscopical Society, instituted in 1881. The Society was instituted for the study of natural history in all its branches, and for the encouragement of public interest and concern in these matters.

An indoor talk is held on one Wednesday every month from September to April, in the Guide Hall, 33 Melville Street at 7.30pm. Posters of date, time and topic are in all libraries. All are welcome. Outdoor excursions are held throughout the year. A copy of the programme for Summer 2009, and details of membership of the Society can be obtained from the Secretary. Or viewed on our website at edinburghnaturalhistorysociety.org.uk



CONTENTS



| | | | |
|--|----------------------------------|-------|-------|
| Council and Excursion Committee | | Page | 1 |
| The President's Thoughts | | Page | 3 |
| Obituaries and Drawings | | Pages | 3-4 |
| Observations on Scottish Mycology in 2008 | | | |
| and A Review of Fungus Course at Kindrogan | Neville Kilkenny | Pages | 5-7 |
| Tree Mallow and Puffins | John Hunt | Pages | 8-9 |
| The Journal - We have come a long way! | Elizabeth Farquharson | Page | 10 |
| 2008 - One Rainfall Record after Another | Munro Dunn | Page | 11 |
| A Second Visit to a French Nature Reserve | Mary Robertson | Page | 12 |
| What have they been eating? | Elizabeth Farquharson | Page | 13 |
| The Wildlife of Glencotho Estate | Elizabeth Everill | Page | 14 |
| Three Interesting Plant Gall Finds | Jane Squirrell and Graham French | Page | 15 |
| Forth Island Seabird Counts | Bill Bruce | Pages | 16-17 |
| The Head Gardener's Cottage | Lyn Blades | Page | 17 |
| Biodiversity at Hound Point | David Adamson | Page | 18 |
| Jackdaws | Jackie Muscott | Page | 18 |
| Versatile Blue Tits | Jackie Muscott | Page | 19 |
| Look out for Bears! | Jackie Muscott | Page | 19 |
| Encounters with Animals | Jackie Muscott | Page | 20 |
| Excursions List 2008 | | Page | 21 |
| Excursions 2008 | | Page | 22-45 |
| WWT Caerlaverock | Joanie McNaughton | Page | 46 |
| Wharfedale | | Page | 47-52 |
| Observations 2008 | | Pages | 53-57 |
| Observations from my Garden in Galashiels | Jean Murray | Page | 57 |
| Nature Red in Tooth and Claw | Roddy Clark | Page | 57 |
| Winter Talks 2008 | | Pages | 58-59 |
| Society's Equipment and Library | | Page | 59 |
| Acknowledgements | | Page | 60 |



THE PRESIDENT'S THOUGHTS

Neville Crowther



Last year I intimated that the success of the society can be measured by the fullness of our timetable of both lectures and excursions and the enthusiastic attendance at all. This measure of success has again been evident during 2008. It is of course dependent upon a network of individuals willing to work on committees, to take a lead in a host of roles and to perform in many unremarked ways.

However, attrition in various forms has begun to erode our capacity to support such a variety of activities and endeavours. By a series of coincidences we will lose several key officers in the next few months, who clearly need to be replaced. After twelve years of demanding work on the Journal Sandra Stewart and Lyn Blades are to retire from their editorial responsibilities. If you are in any doubt about the continued high quality of their productions you only need to read on. We are also about to face the retirement of Joanie McNaughton our Honorary Secretary and Jane Squirrell the Hon. Treasurer. Both have served with distinction for well beyond the required time span. Jane is leaving the RGBE to be married and moving away from Edinburgh. Both have functioned with a smoothness and efficiency which belies the difficulties inherent in the job. In October Julia Macintosh will step down from her position as organiser of the lecture programme. Thanks go to her for the quiet but effective conduct of her office.

Along with many others I have been concerned about the demographic trends of our membership for some time. This tendency has been brought home to us all in the last few weeks when four highly respected and long-standing members have passed away. Edith Wright and Scott Robertson had been unwell for some time but leave pleasant memories for many of us of their participation in our activities over several decades. Margaret Perry and Eric Perry remained active in the society until this year, still serving on committees and leading excursions. We are saddened by the loss of all four and offer our condolences to their family and friends.

Please consider the implications of the previous paragraphs. If you think that you may have untapped talents or just enjoy a job well done have a word with a council member soon.

You will not fail to enjoy reading this Journal. It celebrates the past year, but also presages the delights of the next. In Darwin's bicentennial year how could we not look forward to our inheritance as natural historians.

OBITUARIES



SCOTT ROBERTSON

Scott died in December after a long spell of illness. He and Mary joined the Nats many years ago and together regularly took part in the Society's activities. Scott will be remembered for, among other things, his pawky sense of humour. On a Nats outing he would often walk off on his own and rejoin the group later. One story is told of how sometimes the sound of a Woodpecker drumming could be heard in the distance; or was it a walking stick being tapped on a tree??

Lyn Blades

EDITH WRIGHT

Edith was one of the first people in Britain to obtain a degree in Agriculture. She settled in Edinburgh after obtaining a post as farm adviser at the College of Agriculture and, as an expert on raspberries, saw the industry move from hand- to machine-picking. After retirement she led a busy and active life, including working as a volunteer in Holyrood Park. She attended Natural History Society meetings until shortly before her death.

Jackie Muscott

MARGARET PERRY

Margaret, who died in early January, was a very pleasant member of the Nats who preferred to work in the background helping in whatever capacity she felt she could be useful. She joined the Nats soon after she retired from her work as a scientist at the Roslin Institute, doing pioneering work on the electron-microscope. She published papers in top scientific journals including electron-microscope images in the *New Scientist*. Over her years in the Nats she spent time on the Council, where she arranged the indoor programme, and on the Excursion Committee where she organised several of our annual field trips, as well as leading and acting as backup on many outings.

Lyn Blades

ERIC PERRY

Eric and Eileen joined the Nats when they moved to Scotland 18 years ago from Hertfordshire. Eric was always very proud of his Scottish roots and had many medals for Highland dancing. They were very good Scottish Country dancers too and soon became involved in the Borders Country Dance groups.

We only discovered what a talented artist Eric was when in 1998 he sent a 'Query' to the Journal, accompanied by a sketch. He seemed pleased when we asked him if he would do drawings for us and ever since he has been entertaining and delighting us with his beautiful drawings and his lovely sense of humour. He was not able to do any drawings for this Journal but he gave his permission to use past drawings which we have done freely.

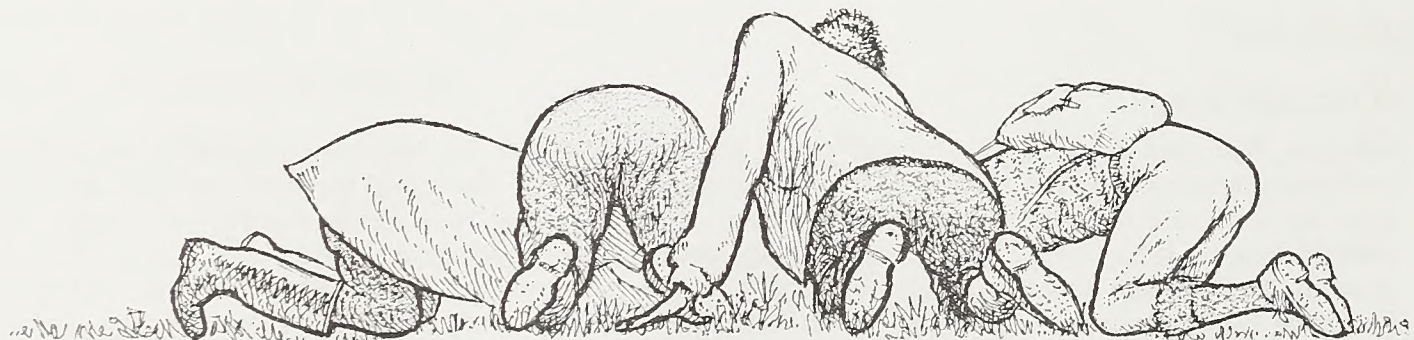
Eric and Eileen also led many walks in the Peebles area, always finishing with tea and Eileen's lovely cakes on the lawn at Kilcreggan, served by Eric. He was a true gentleman and we will miss him.



In the ENHS Journal of 1999 Eric's lovely drawing is from the painting *BOTANISTS 1928* by Joseph Southall. Hereford Museums kindly gave us permission to reproduce it.



....and this was Eric's interpretation of 1999 botanists at work !



OBSERVATIONS ON SCOTTISH MYCOLOGY IN 2008
AND A REVIEW OF *IDENTIFYING FUNGI*, A COURSE BY LIZ HOLDEN
AT KINDROGAN FIELD STUDIES CENTRE

Neville Kilkenny

The year had started slowly. I was working my way through herbarium material, for a project that Roy Watling, my apprenticeship mentor, had encouraged me to take on, to 'get my name out there a bit'! *Hydnum ellipsosporum*, described by Ostrow & Beenken from Germany in 2004, is macroscopically identical to *H. rufescens* (Terracotta Hedgehog), but microscopically there is a surprise waiting, because the former has, unlike the smaller sub-globose spores of the latter, large ellipsoid spores, as the name suggests. Roy was sure that the species was likely to be found in Britain, probably previously overlooked. Possibly it may even have found its way into herbarium material unexamined, submitted as *H. rufescens* (Photographs Page 4), and was therefore just waiting to be recognised as a new record for Britain. So I diligently worked my way through material in Edinburgh to no avail, and then started on material from Kew. Despite several other projects occasionally providing welcome distraction, the more material I looked at, the more the project became not only tedious but seemed unlikely to be fruitful (**but read on!**). So I was delighted to stumble, more by luck than skill, upon another genus, not just species, previously **never recorded in Britain**. The discovery of *Mycenastrum corium* at John Muir Country Park on a foray with The Fungus Group of South East Scotland not only lifted my spirits, but also meant that it wouldn't be the end of the world, if the *H. ellipsosporum* project didn't prove rewarding.

In the late spring I joined the BMS foray to Arran, with Liz Holden and Mary Clarkson, which was organised by Graeme Walker. We spent much of the week searching new sites for *Hypocreopsis rhododendri* (Hazel Gloves), without any success but Liz at least was rewarded by an interesting find which she described as 'a splash of whitewash', identified later as *Hyphoderma medioburiense*, which has only been recorded twice before from Scotland, and from Wales.

Due to the seemingly relentless wet weather, the British press were determined to find some positive spin, focussing on the possible profusion of edible fungi, asking mycologists to comment on the amazing fruiting of fungi in Scotland this year. However, there didn't really appear to be many more fruit-bodies this year than any other. Records of the majority of species were plentiful, but not in any way exceptional. The only odd pattern which seemed to appear was that, although members of the *Boletaceae* were recorded, some were not where they were expected. The direction of the media interest quickly changed though, as four people from the Altyre Estate outside Forres were treated for orellan poisoning, a syndrome associated with the ingestion of fungi from the *Orellanus* group within the genus *Cortinarius*, in this

case *C. speciosissimus*, now known as *C. rubellus*. Then it was reported that two Thai women had consumed the deadly *Amanita phalloides* (Death Cap), on the Isle of Wight, thinking that they had found a species they were familiar with at home from the genus *Volvariella* (Rosegill or Paddystraw mushrooms). Regrettably, one of them later died. It was worrying that the press seemed more interested in printing photographs of the famous patient of 'The Forres Poisoning' than highlighting the poisonous fungi involved. In fact they didn't even get the species name correct for the Forres reports.

British mycology is apparently marching towards a vacuum of professional taxonomic expertise, from which there is little hope of recovery, and I was beginning to question the value of my apprenticeship, as it would in no way change this situation, despite this aim being the principal goal at its conception. There didn't appear to be any employment opportunities, and neither was there anyone strategically placed within conservation who might be able to utilise the specialist knowledge that I was gaining. However, I was more than aware that the conservation of these species is vital to the underpinning of ecosystems around the planet, and raising public awareness of these organisms is worthwhile. I had recently submitted a response to the East Lothian Local Biodiversity Action Plan, regarding inclusion of fungal interest, and had a very positive response from the local LBAP officer. With a species 'new to Britain' under my belt, and the sure sense that there was a place for mycology in today's world, even if it was to deter the public from poisoning themselves, I still felt confident about what I was doing.

It was with this positive frame of mind that I looked forward to attending Liz Holden's *Identifying Fungi* course at Kindrogan Field Studies Centre. The previous year had proved exceptional - 14 attendees, with various experience in mycology attended the week-long, residential course. By the end of the week relative beginners, like me, were gaining confidence in using keys which included references to complex structures one could only observe through microscopic examination. I felt it had been the perfect introduction to my apprenticeship. Liz was an excellent teacher. This year though was likely to be of a different nature entirely. Only eight people had booked to attend the course: two beginners, myself (kindly funded by the Edinburgh Natural History Society) and another of intermediate experience, and four of the UK's specialists, who cover families including the *Russulaceae*, *Cortinariaeae*, *Boletaceae*, and *Coprinaceae*! However any concerns I had that the nature of the course would change and most likely be split into two groups, were quickly dispelled. Even on

the very first evening of the course, one could instantly recognise the friendly and generous nature of these specialists, not to mention their enthusiasm.

There was a buzz in the workroom, right from the word 'go'. It had been a beautiful clear sunny afternoon and people had been out collecting around the Kindrogan grounds from the moment they arrived. Already appreciative noises were being made as people invited one another to look at slides or specimens. After the inevitable generous 3-course evening meal, we were given a quick introduction to Kindrogan by Martyn, the centre manager, and then Liz talked through the schedule for the week.

We were to start the week slowly, with a look at the surrounding grounds of Kindrogan, followed by visits to several sites over the next five days. After such a clear night, Saturday morning was both cold and a little wet, but this did not seem to dampen any spirits. Liz started us off with a talk on good collecting discipline. There were several significant finds including *Flammulaster limulatus*, a preliminary red list species, and *Melanoleuca albifolia*, *Russula clavipes*, *R. postiana*, *R. vinososordida* (unknown in the UK before 2008, but also recorded elsewhere this year), and *Paxillus obscurusporus* which, although similar to *P. involutus* (Brown Rollrim), has a vinaceous-brown spore print, chunkier stipe, and a larger inrolled margin. This is the first record for the species in the UK, but it has no doubt been overlooked. I was happy to find *Helvella macropus* (Felt Saddle), which is quite intriguing, although not very unusual. On our return to the workroom, Liz gave a short talk on 'what to do when you get back to the lab'. Once identified, all specimens were laid out on a large table in the workroom, placed in trays, and labelled for all to see. After our evening meal, Liz gave a talk on macroscopic features that aid identification of fungi. Afterwards, most of us continued working on identifications late into the night.

On Sunday Liz took us to Killiecrankie in the morning, but although the northern end of the site was very profitable, the mycological interest began to wane as we followed the path by the river in the narrow gorge. However I was extremely pleased to find a beautiful specimen of the almost electric blue/violet *Cortinarius terpsichores*, which has only one previous record in the UK, from Northern Ireland. A quick discussion over lunch, and it was decided that we would head south to Tummel Bridge and spend the afternoon there, which was fortuitous, as the site proved utterly wonderful. *Amanita virosa* (Destroying Angel) was a first for me, as was *A. phalloides* (Death Cap) which, although common south of the border, is quite rare in Scotland. The latter was recorded by Antony Burnham. Other interesting records included the copper red *Cortinarius cinnabarinus* (Photographs Page 4), *Lactarius volemus*, *Russula intermedia*, *R. romellii*, and *Tricholoma inocybeoides*.

Later that afternoon, refreshed by tea and freshly baked cake (this was to become a daily treat), another outstanding collection was identified, *Russula cf purpurata* (*xerampelina* group) which, if confirmed, will also be a first UK record. Liz gave a talk on microscopic features of fungi, and basic techniques on how to observe them. Again the lights burnt bright in the workroom till the late hours.

All of the group were looking forward to the field trip on Monday, which would take us first to Morrone Birkwood SSSI, and later in the afternoon, to two sites on Mar Lodge Estate. It was a long drive, but it was unanimously agreed to be worthwhile. Morrone saw Alan Hills in his element, examining different species of *Leccinum*, especially around the parking area. The path up into the Birkwood took us through some grassland alongside a lochan which supported both *Hygrocybe persistens* (Persistent Waxcap) and *H. coccinea* (Scarlet Waxcap). Geoffrey Kibby generously spent his morning talking the group through all of the many species of *Russula*, *Cortinarius*, and *Lactarius*, that were collected. Sadly there was no evidence of *Clavariadelphus ligula*, previously thought to be extinct, but since recorded at this site; however we saw an amazing display of *Pholiota squarrosa* (Shaggy Scalycap) on a Rowan tree, and I recorded *Clitocybe odora* (Aniseed Funnel) as well as noting several stunning examples of *Amanita muscaria* (Fly Agaric). On our way into Mar Lodge we stopped by Inverey Flats beside the River Dee, locally referred to as 'The Golf Course', where several Aspens supported the bracket fungus *Phellinus tremulae*, and the grassland below was host to several species of Waxcap, including *Hygrocybe reidii* (Honey Waxcap), as well as *H. persistens*, *H. conica* and *H. coccinea*. Alan Hills also collected specimens of *Leccinum aurantiacum*. After only a brief stop we proceeded to Inverey, an extremely old stand of *Pinus sylvestris* bordered by the Dee to the north and the road to the south which, as a plantation, sadly failed to achieve the designation of SSSI.

Inverey was beautiful. Its mycota left everybody breathless. We parked the minibus behind a holiday cottage on some grassland which also supported many Waxcap species, including *H. irrigata* (Slimy Waxcap), *H. pratensis* (Meadow Waxcap), and *H. reidii* again. Liz had several plots for Stipitate Hydroids, or Tooth Fungi at the site, and these revealed examples of *Sarcodon squamosus*, *S. glaucopus* and *Hydnellum ferrugineum*. There was prolific fruiting of *Rozites caperatus*, and specimens of *Russula postiana* and *R. renidens*, as well as many other species of *Russula*, *Cortinarius*, and many representatives of the *Boletaceae*. I collected an unusual *Cortinarius* which Antony and Geoffrey Kibby identified as *C. diosmus*, a new British record. They collected two other species, *C. poppyzon* and *Inocybe relicina*, both of which were also new to Britain! *Pholiota pinicola*, a rarely recorded species, easily overlooked, was brought into the workroom later in the day by John Weir, a visiting field mycologist.

Tuesday's field trip was just up the road again, to Faskally. Despite the rain, I was particularly interested in visiting the site as I was to lead a foray there later in the year. I was accompanied by about half of the group. Liz and the remaining members of the group decided to catch up on a backlog of material. Those of us who did endure the rain were rewarded, as we returned with collections of *Coprinopsis pachyderma*, *Coprinus lilatincta*, *Paxillus obscurusporus* (Photographs Page 4), *Phaeocollybia lugubris*, *Russula renidens* and *R. fusconigra*, as well as *R. pubescens* which..... was new to Britain! Faskally was incredibly diverse, and I alone recognised or collected some 80 species, although none of them that unusual. The rare and beautiful *Cortinarius violaceus* (Violet Webcap) had been recorded there the day before, by a group from the Centre studying photography, but sadly, was not recorded again. Derek Schafer, however, photographed a wonderful example of *Fistulina hepatica* (Beefsteak Fungus). Later in the afternoon, Liz gave us an in-depth talk on woodland fungi, which we followed with an excellent evening meal, and then we again returned to our microscopes.

The Birks of Aberfeldy was the destination for the next day, and it was a pleasure to see collections of several site specialities such as *Strobilomyces strobilaceus* (Old Man of the Woods) (Photographs Page 4), *Amanita phalloides* again, *Heboloma radicosum* (Rooting Poisonpie) with a wonderful aroma of marzipan, and the UK BAP species *Cantharellus friesii* (Orange Chanterelle). **Another new record for Scotland was *Limacella delicata* var. *vinosarubescens*.** The grassy area of old Birch woodland to the east as one climbs the gorge is a wonderful habitat. Among these old trees Liz collected specimens of what appeared to be *Hydnum rufescens*, but when Robert, another of our group, took a look at the spores, we were all amazed to hear that they were large and ellipsoid! **Liz had brought the amazing total of species 'new to Britain' to seven, as she had in fact collected *H. ellipsosporum*, the focus of my attention previously for so many hours.** Liz rounded off her afternoon talks, focussing on grassland fungi and their conservation.

Thursday, the last field trip, took the group to Black Spout Wood. The most notable feature was a wonderful display of the rarely recorded *Phaeolepiota aurea* (Golden Bootleg) (Photographs Page 4). This was the end of a truly amazing week, not only because of the wonderful fungi that were recorded but also, for the people who attended the course, the generosity of those people with their time for others, and because of everyone's respect for Liz, who had led yet another fantastic course.

Since attending the course, I have been lucky enough to work alongside Liz. Liz kindly agreed to tender jointly to SNH, for the Site Condition Monitoring of SSSIs with fungi as a notified feature. This year I was working as her apprentice, and for the next two years we will share the contract between us. At the end of this year's round of monitoring, we found ourselves south of Aviemore at Lochan Mor. We again found *Hydnum ellipsosporum*, and the quite unusual *Mycena septentrionalis*, smelling of Pelargonium, and with 'hourglass'-shaped cystidia. Having completed our monitoring plots, we ate lunch then continued to explore the site, mainly for the sheer joy of being in a beautiful place on a cold, but sunny, autumn day. Of the many things we discussed, we spoke of the week at Kindrogan, and about how many Scottish fungi there must be out there still to be discovered and understood. We wondered how we could stimulate more professional interest in taxonomic and conservation mycology in Scotland. As we talked, we came upon a sphagnum bowl, with a small island in the centre, supporting a solitary Scots Pine. Carefully making our way around the edge, venturing as far as we dared, I saw a tiny grey *Mycena* that seemed unfamiliar. Liz didn't recognise it either, so we collected it and Liz took it to Ern Emmett, who is a specialist in the genus. He has confirmed it as *Mycena concolor*..... **never previously recorded in Britain!**



Phaeolepiota aurea is one of the Edinburgh Biodiversity Action Plan Species. It was recorded in the Meadows in October 2006. See 'A Sock in the Meadows' in the 2006 Journal.

TREE MALLOW AND PUFFINS

John Hunt

The islands of Craigleith and Fidra near North Berwick are the scene of a remarkable volunteer conservation project to help nesting puffins.

The chain of four islands near North Berwick is one of the glories of East Lothian – stretching for five miles from Fidra in the west to the Bass Rock in the east. Known by some as the East Lothian Emeralds, these islands add enchantment to the coastal landscape while they are also of international importance for their breeding seabirds. Unfortunately in recent years an invasive plant, tree mallow, has spread across two of the islands and threatens the nesting puffins and other birds.

Tree mallow *Lavatera arborea* is a formidable plant growing to nearly three metres in height which can form a dense jungle which is difficult for people to penetrate, let alone nesting seabirds. It is not native to the north and east of Britain but was introduced to the Bass Rock more than 300 years ago because its velvety leaves were valued by the garrison of the fortress as a poultice for wounds and burns.

For many years the Bass was the only Scottish location for this plant and with its size and mauve flowers it was considered to be an interesting and attractive curiosity. However more recently it has spread onto other islands to become a serious conservation problem and it is now looked on considerably less favourably!

Tree mallow is thought to have reached Craigleith, the island nearest North Berwick, some time around 1960, its seeds probably carried by birds. Its subsequent spread may have been helped by the demise of rabbits from myxomatosis, as they are known to eat the plant. Tree mallow thrives in soils high in nitrates and phosphates which are typical of a seabird island and its rapid spread in the last 15 years has also been helped by climate change and the lack of hard frosts which would kill the plant. Until recently, Craigleith had a very large and important puffin colony but tree mallow has smothered the puffin burrows and deterred birds from nesting. The plants grow through the burrows and physically prevent puffins using them, while the dense cover of the mallow forest is very off-putting to puffins which like to have an open access to their nest sites.

By 2006 tree mallow covered almost all of Craigleith and the puffin population had crashed from nearly 30,000 nesting pairs to probably less than 5,000. Other breeding species such as eider and fulmar were also adversely affected. Tree mallow reached the RSPB reserve of Fidra in the 1990s and quickly spread to cover a third of this island. Its nesting seabirds were also displaced and public access became increasingly difficult.

Puffins are incredibly popular birds which visitors to the Scottish Seabird Centre at North Berwick particularly want to see – either on the remote control cameras or through the telescopes. The rapid decline of puffin numbers since the Centre opened in 2000 became of increasing concern to the local and wider community. This led in late 2006 to a Channel 4 TV programme which was devoted to the problem of tree mallow on Craigleith. This helped to generate a lot of publicity and attracted volunteers who cut an initial area of tree mallow as part of the programme.

Following this a small Management Group was set up, with the approval and support of the landowners, to co-ordinate the control of tree mallow on Craigleith and Fidra using volunteers. Under the auspices of the Scottish Seabird Centre the *SOS Puffin* project has been launched and substantial funds raised thanks to the generous support of Viridor Credits (landfill tax money), Scottish Natural Heritage and other bodies to help pay for the equipment and transport costs involved.

However a remarkable feature of the project has been that it is all being done by volunteers. Impressive numbers of people have offered their help and over the last two years work parties have been organised whenever the weather allows, mainly at weekends but occasionally mid-week. Only during the breeding season, late April to July, does work stop to avoid disturbing nesting birds. Volunteers are taken out from North Berwick to one of the islands and spend up to five hours cutting the tree mallow with loppers and shears. At first sight it seems an impossible task to make any impression on the huge dense stands of tree mallow, but with time and numbers good progress can be made. A small number of trained volunteers use brush cutters though much of the work is best done by hand.

Perhaps the most challenging task is actually landing on Craigleith where there is no jetty and the boat has to come up against the rocks so that you can scramble ashore. This manoeuvre can only be done safely in calm conditions and a number of trips have to be cancelled because of the wind or the swell. The Seabird Centre has recently purchased a splendid large inflatable boat which can carry 12 passengers and this has made landings easier, but getting people onto the island is still the main limiting factor in winning the war against the tree mallow.

Both islands are distinct worlds of their own, physically close to, but also magically remote from, the hectic life of the mainland. On fine days the views have a Mediterranean quality, while the birds and seals are a delight.

There is a photograph of the Tree Mallow on
Photographs page 4

To date over 250 volunteers have been out on work party visits. They come in all ages from 16 to over 70, mostly from East Lothian and Edinburgh but some from further afield. Though it is hard work, volunteers clearly enjoy the experience and find it very satisfying. Many come back for repeat visits and some enthusiasts have been out on more than 10 occasions.

To date over four hectares (10 acres) of tree mallow have been cleared on Craigleith (about three quarters of the total extent) as a result of 45 visits over the last two years. However ongoing work is required to deal with the seedlings which continue to come up in the areas cleared. It is expected that repeated cutting will eventually exhaust the seed bank, but progress will be reviewed and alternative methods of control kept under review.

A detailed programme of ecological monitoring has been set up and is carried out by a scientist from Aberdeen University. It has been very encouraging to find that many of the old puffin burrows once cleared of tree mallow have then been re-used by puffins, though it is too early to know whether this represents a recovery of the population. An increase of grasses and other plants such as charlock and hemp-nettle has also been seen, which is a good sign as these will help to suppress the mallow seedlings.

A detailed management plan has been prepared for Craigleith which envisages at least three more years work to bring tree mallow under control. There is no likelihood of eradicating the plant but once it is reduced to a low level it should be possible to keep it that way with relatively little effort.

Fidra has been visited less often (11 work parties in the last two years) as the mallow problem here is less acute and the task not quite so large. Areas used by puffins have been cleared of tree mallow and its further spread halted. In time it may be possible largely to eliminate the plant from this island.

A count in 2008 of the number of occupied puffin burrows on the Isle of May, which is only ten miles from North Berwick, showed a significant decline on the previous count five years earlier. This may be due to the shortage of sand eels, the preferred food of puffins, which has been linked to poor breeding success in many seabird species in recent years. The reasons for the lack of sand eels are not fully understood, but the most likely causes are the rise in seawater temperature as a result of climate change and the impacts of overfishing. If shortage of food remains a problem then removing the tree mallow may not by itself be enough to restore puffin numbers. We shall see. In 2009 a count of the occupied puffin burrows on Craigleith will be carried out to compare with the last count in 2003.

An important part of the *SOS Puffin* project is to inform and educate people about the issue. Many school parties come to the Seabird Centre and part of their experience is to learn about tree mallow and puffins. Some lucky children from local schools have been taken out to Fidra, where landing is easier than Craigleith, in order to see the island and try their hand at cutting tree mallow. That goes down really well and once they start cutting it is hard to stop them!

Thanks to a lot of hard work by our wonderful volunteers an encouraging start has been made on this project. However we recognise that bringing tree mallow under control remains a huge undertaking and will require substantial commitment and input for some years to come. This will all be worthwhile if we can bring back the delightful puffins to these islands.

Anyone who would like to help by joining a work party should contact the Scottish Seabird Centre at North Berwick or e-mail johnf_hunt@yahoo.co.uk.

Hurray ! Aren't these volunteers wonderful !



THE JOURNAL - WE HAVE COME A LONG WAY!

Elizabeth Farquharson

As most of the current membership joined after our present Journal was well established it might be of interest, and cause some amusement, to recall the activities of its early days. The Society published *Transactions* until 1915, and did not restart publication after the war was over. It was nearly 50 years before the Society decided that some form of replacement was desirable. In 1965 the first Newsletter was printed under the editorship of Michael Usher, now a Life Member, and at that time a postgraduate student working in the Department of Agriculture.

In the early years most contributions were hand-written (and not always very legible) as not many had access to a typewriter. A wide spectrum of natural history was represented - a policy which has continued ever since. Michael passed the edited contributions to Mrs Little, not a member but a very willing helper, who converted the jumble of papers into something that could be given to the printers. For the first few years (if I remember correctly) the printing was done by the Department of Agriculture at King's Buildings.

I still have vivid memories of sitting in Michael's room at Pollock Halls, along with Bill Hall, who was secretary, putting together and stapling by hand the ten pages of the 1965 edition. The Newsletter proved to be popular and the number of contributions increased, which led to the decision in 1972 to change the title to *Journal*. As time went by, production became more sophisticated, but it relied heavily on manpower. For several years it was put together in my house, on the Monday or Tuesday before the March meeting. The printed sheets were collected from the printers and brought here, unloaded, and carried upstairs to the disused drawing room, where we had a ping-pong table. This was quite hard work, as the boxes were heavy. The sheets were then put in correct order round the table, anticlockwise. A team of about eight then went into action, walking round the table, picking up sheets from each pile, then handing the pile to the person (usually Nancy Fisher) who stapled them together. By this time we had acquired an electric stapler.



The stapled copies were then moved to the landing, where Connie Stewart and helpers put them and the summer programmes into envelopes (reused ones as we could not afford new ones).

We usually finished by about 2 o'clock, when we descended to the kitchen for soup and sandwiches. Margaret Watson fortified us at this stage with some of her home-made wine, which gave us the strength to carry all the boxes down to the cars; so the Journals were ready for distribution at the meeting on the following day. For many years the ENHS could barely afford to post the Journals. Charles Rawcliffe produced an excellent plan of the city based on small areas in each of which a volunteer hand-delivered to those who were not at the meeting.

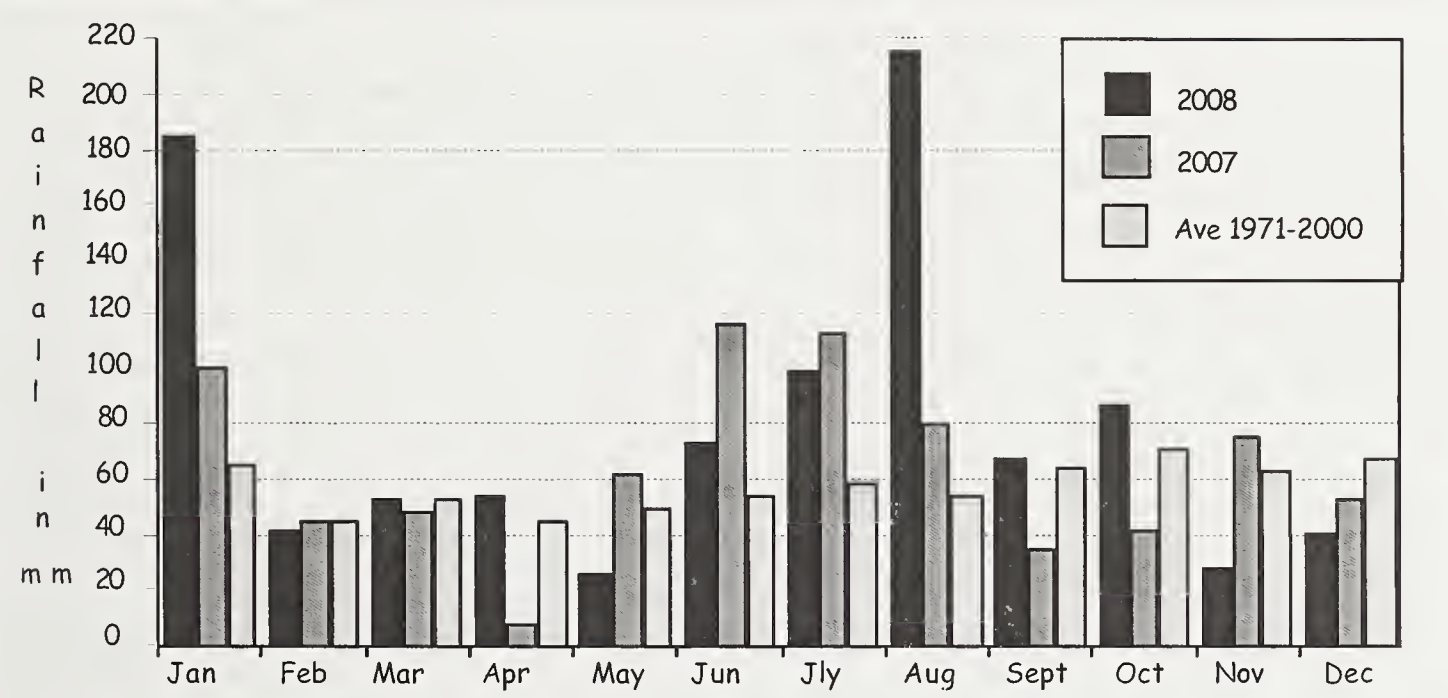
Photos taken by Ena Gillespie during the preparation of the 1984 Journal

2008 ONE RAINFALL RECORD AFTER ANOTHER

Munro Dunn

COMPARISON OF RAINFALL in 2008 and 2007 with AVERAGE for 1971 - 2000 (in mms.)

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jly | Aug | Sept | Oct | Nov | Dec | Total |
|-----------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|------|-----|-----|-----|-------|
| 2008 | 185 | 42 | 53 | 55 | 25 | 74 | 100 | 216 | 68 | 87 | 28 | 41 | 974 |
| 2007 | 101 | 45 | 48 | 7 | 62 | 117 | 114 | 80 | 35 | 42 | 76 | 54 | 781 |
| 1971-2000 | 65 | 45 | 53 | 45 | 50 | 55 | 59 | 55 | 64 | 72 | 63 | 68 | 694 |



The rain gods that hover over Corstorphine showed their hand early. 9 days in January had over 10mm each, and only 3 days did not have a significant fall. The result was a total of 185mm, the highest total for any month since the writer of this note started recording rainfall in Corstorphine 42 years ago.

After January came 3 unremarkable months and a May with only half the average fall. However, a very wet summer was to follow with excesses of 35%, 70% and almost 300% in June, July and August respectively over the 1971 - 2000 average. The last of these, with 216mm, broke the record for the wettest month, which had only been established in January. The result was a total for the year of 974mm (38in), despite an average September, an only somewhat wet October, and relatively dry concluding months, especially November which had a deficit of 56%. The previous highest total was the 944 mm recorded in 2002.

On 30 days, 10mm or more fell. On the 6th of August, the wettest day of the year brought 57mm, some 20mm short of the record for a single day. This fell in the middle of a 6-day period when 112mm accumulated. There was no dry spell longer than the 9 days between 18th and 26th May.

How long 2008's record will stand is open to question. The long-term trend is masked by quite wide random variations, but it seems likely that since 40 years ago average rainfall in this area has risen by between 10% and 15%. It is interesting to note that the 401mm recorded in the two wettest months of 2008 is not far short of the very dry 1972's whole year total of 466mm.

Dr Stephan Helfer of the RBGE was kind enough to put that body's daily rainfall records and daily returns for many other weather variables at the disposal of the Society. The different characteristics of Inverleith and Corstorphine Hill result in a somewhat lower rainfall at the former, in this case 908mm as compared with 974mm. Despite this, 6th August was wetter at Inverleith than at Corstorphine, 64mm as compared with 57mm. This is no doubt accounted for by the localised nature of thundery downpours.

Temperatures were once again above the long-term average at RBGE, albeit not by as much as in 2006 and 2007. The average day maximum and night minimum, at 12.8°C and 6.1°C, were both about 0.3°C above average. Day maximum temperatures reached 20°C on only 21 occasions between the end of May and the end of August but chiefly in late July. 30th July was the warmest day with a maximum of 32.9°C. The sunshine total of 1284 hrs was 8% below the long-term average of 1401. This followed 2 years with above average sunshine. May was particularly sunny, with 177 hours; and August particularly dull with only 79 hours.

On Saturday 17th May my daughter and I visited La Cote Sainte-Helene hoping to see some of the promised Orchids. We were fortunate in that a Ranger had been organised to lead anyone interested that day. He hadn't counted on two Scottish ladies, however! He was a bit nonplussed; he found it difficult to know his species when he heard the English/Scottish accents. The rest of the group were a bit miffed too!

Weather had been awful, with heavy rain and thunderstorms; the morning was dull but brightened up and the sun broke through. There are about 16 Orchid species present in the Reserve. We were lucky to see half that number, the earlier flowering ones, and I must return later in the season to see the rest.

The ranger found Early Purples *Orchis mascula*, now fading, while I saw several Twayblades *Listera ovata* beside the path. We doubled back beneath the trees to find a single Fly Orchid *Ophrys insectifera*, then we climbed up to the south-facing slope of meadow, where most of the Orchids are found. On the way were two magnificent Lady Orchids *Orchis purpurea*, with dark purple hoods and pale pink lips. It is quite common in calcareous woodland. I have found it previously at other sites.

These dry slopes had been traditionally grazed by sheep and goats, until a change in agricultural policy and a drop in the price of wool caused the site to be neglected in the 1950s. This allowed invasive coarse grasses, ferns and shrubs to proliferate, with the loss of rare native species. In the early 1990s the local community of farmers and shepherds became concerned at the loss of their unique rich flora of dry chalky grasslands, named *larris* locally, plus the native fauna and insect life that went with it. Together they persuaded the *Conservatoire des Sites Naturels de Picardie* and others to restore the pastures. Sheep and goats were reintroduced and gradually the habitat restored. Nowadays, seasonal grazing is controlled in successive areas by electric fencing, after the main flowering season is over. Woolly lawnmowers! A French flying flock ??

So what our party found was a carpet of flowers on short grassland - a beautiful meadow. We were soon crouched over the Orchids! We found Bee Orchid *Ophrys apifera*, Pyramidal Orchid *Anacamptis pyramidalis*, Fragrant Orchid *Gymnadenia conopsea*, Greater Butterfly Orchid *Platanthera chlorantha*, and Early Spider Orchid *Ophrys sphegodes* in no time at all.

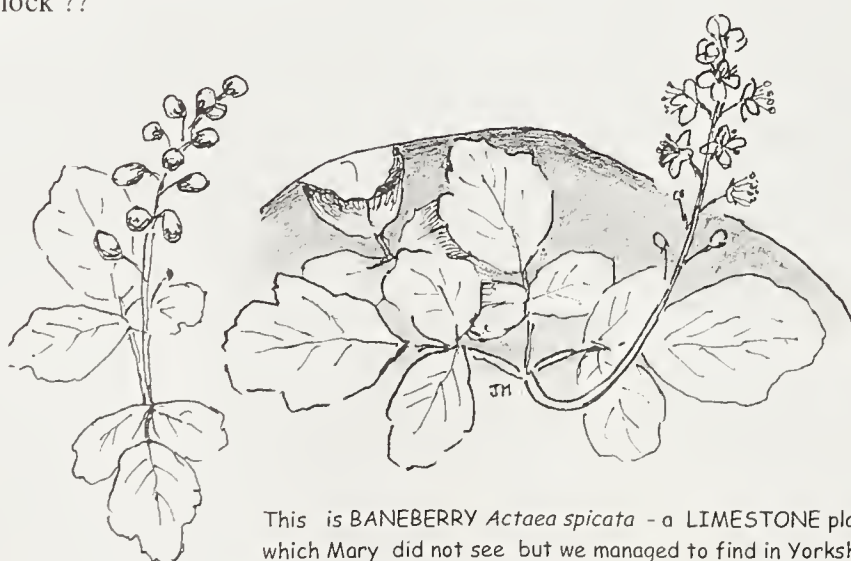
Other lovely species included Salad Burnet *Sanguisorba minor* with its red styles, Horseshoe Vetch *Hippocrepis comosa* with its curved horseshoe-like pods, Yellow-wort *Blackstonia perfoliata*, Stemless Carline Thistle *Carlina acaulis*, Greater Knapweed *Centaurea scabiosa*, Lesser Quaking Grass *Briza minor*, and blue Milkwort *Polygala vulgaris*.

There were few Butterflies but we saw Green-veined White, a few Blues and a small, striped Bee. I found a huge Burgundy (Roman) Snail. Herb Paris *Paris quadrifolia* and Baneberry *Actaea spicata* are listed but were not found. Green Woodpecker yaffled happily and a Yellowhammer was seen.

Finally allow me to correct the location of my daughter's home in France. It is in Vexin and not Verdun as stated on page 27 of the 2007 Journal. Blame my bad writing for this error and not our poor, hardworking editors.

APOLOGIES

Oh dear. Our apologies Mary. It's our ignorance to blame. You see we had heard of Verdun, but Vexin is unfamiliar to us. Sorry.
Editors



This is BANEBERRY *Actaea spicata* - a LIMESTONE plant which Mary did not see but we managed to find in Yorkshire

WHAT HAVE THEY BEEN EATING ?

Elizabeth Farquharson

There are times when one would like to know what is being eaten by a particular creature. This can be simple curiosity, such as wanting to know the diet of Owls in a certain area. But there can be more serious reasons, when an animal is accused of killing newborn lambs, raiding the nests of game birds or creating havoc amongst poultry. And one needs proof to substantiate these claims.

Owls digest their food at favourite perches, and on the ground below there will be pellets of undigested food that has been regurgitated. These pellets are dry and crumbly and inoffensive to handle. However, the thought of examining the droppings of Fox, Badger, Otter or Mink is rather less attractive, but not as bad as it might seem. When droppings are exposed to the open air they dry out quite quickly, and the offensive material disappears, leaving only what could not be digested. To start identification, break up the mass and divide into separate piles. One pile could be of feathers, the hard parts of beetles and the wings of Lepidoptera. As they keep their colour while passing through the gut, an attempt at identification can be made. Another pile could be of bones and bone fragments. It is best to ignore the tiny bones like the limb bones, the ribs and the vertebrae of the backbone. For identification one uses the skull, jaw bones and teeth. A third pile could be of vegetable material such as grass, cereal husks and fruit remains. Fur and hair could form another pile.

Identification of bones is a bit daunting at first sight. The tiny bones have already been put aside, so now look at the jaw and skull bones, even if they are broken, as even small parts can give useful information. Divide them into three main groups: the **Insectivores** (Shrew, Mole, Hedgehog) have a full set of teeth and an elongated snout. Hedgehog is the largest, but unlikely to be found in dung. Most of the Shrew teeth are tipped with red. Small **Carnivores** (Weasel and Stoat) are most likely to be found at the roadside. This group has a full set of teeth and a prominent eye tooth. A Weasel skull is under 4 centimetres long and a Stoat's is over 4 centimetres. The remaining bones should all belong to the **Lagomorphs** (Hare and Rabbit), and the **Rodents** (Squirrel, Vole, Mouse and Rat). All these skulls and jaw bones will have sharp strong front teeth, a gap with no teeth, and then some back teeth.

Rabbit and Hare skulls were discussed in the 2002 Journal. Squirrel remains are more likely to be at the roadside. Voles have continuous growing teeth, so are parallel-sided. Mice skulls are very small and Rat skulls are over 4 centimetres long. To sort out the different mice, rats and voles one needs to look up a reference book.

Identification of hair and fur can sometimes be done in the field, but individual hairs may require the help of a microscope. The experts with lab facilities embed the hair in paraffin wax, remove the hair and look at the imprint left on the wax. Lesser mortals find that nail varnish makes a reasonable substitute. All hairs have a patterned surface caused by overlapping scales and the design is different for every group, with minor differences for the species in that group. In the past, much of the work had an industrial basis, with the need to identify many fibres, both animal and vegetable. An excellent reference book is now available, covering all British Mammals. The identification of hair using a microscope needs a fair amount of practice, and I have yet to master the art, but it is an interesting winter occupation.

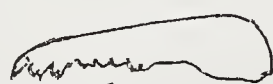
If you are looking at the spraint of an Otter you will find no mammal bones, only fish remains. Identification will probably depend on fish scales. However, Mink have a much more variable diet which includes fish, small mammals, birds and eggs.

A few years ago I looked at a Fox dropping from the Balerno area and was astonished to find that the powerful forefoot of a Mole with its strong claws had negotiated its way through the gut without mishap. Did the Fox let out a yelp of pain when it passed out?

Dung from Corstorphine Hill showed that food put out for the Zoo occupants proved to be a pleasant addition to the diet of the Badgers in the area. In Italy, villagers wondered why wolves were coming from the Nature Reserve at night, until they were caught on camera enjoying the spaghetti thrown out by the local taverna.

Reference: *The Mammals of Britain and Europe*
by Gordon Corbet
Hair of Western European Mammals
by B J Teerink

INSECTIVORE
(SHREW)



ELONGATED SNOUT

CARNIVORE
(STOAT)



PROMINENT EYE TOOTH

RODENT
(SQUIRREL)



NO SIDE TEETH

THE WILDLIFE of GLENCOTHO ESTATE

Elizabeth Everill



Many of your readers will be familiar with Glencotho Estate. Situated 5 miles into the hills west of Broughton village in the Scottish Borders, it has been in existence since the 13th century. We took up residence here on 1st September 2004, having come from Wiltshire, a county abundant in wildlife.

Too eager to learn of the flora and fauna of this 1,000 acre land in the Holm Valley, our impatient eagerness soon turned to disappointment at the dearth of fauna. Local people told us that this is due to the large numbers of raptors, which are protected species. The area had also been overshot of Grouse, Partridge, Hare and Rabbits, thus upsetting the balance of nature. The monthly act of 'lamping' in which wild animals, particularly Foxes, are shot whilst they are caught in the headlights of vehicles at night, had also reduced numbers.

We consoled ourselves with the gloriously hot weather whilst feasting upon the sweet black Cherries hanging on the ancient Geans *Prunus avium* by our front door; one tree is over 300 years old. By 3rd October the weather had become squally and overcast as I took my usual early walk. Turning right to follow the course of the burn. I came face to face with a huge dog Otter *Lutra lutra*. We stared at each other for a few seconds at the surprising meeting, before he whisked round and shot off down the burn towards Holm Water. Days later my son sighted him again and managed to track him some distance downstream, but there have been no further sightings in the intervening years.

We had become aware of the absence of garden birds. Yes, we were thrilled at the circling Buzzards *Buteo buteo* overhead, and to my husband's delight he spotted a Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus*. A Red Kite *Milvus milvus* whizzed across the windscreen of our Landrover one day, and there were sightings of Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*. But of garden birds there was little sign.

We set out to uncover the ancient garden and made two plots for wild flowers. Here in the smaller garden, the area is well protected from raptors by a thick overhanging Rose hedge, a dry stone wall and various Sycamore trees. Slowly a haven of plants has evolved and, with this, the garden birds have returned - several varieties of Tits, Treecreepers, Goldfinches, Chaffinches, Greenfinches and Pied and Yellow Wagtails. Two springs ago a Great Spotted Woodpecker arrived and has returned each spring since. This summer I was particularly pleased to see a family of Blackbirds nesting. Then two Mistle Thrushes appeared, which turned out to be a mixed blessing. We started out in 2008 with a promising crop of Cherries on the Geans, but the Mistle Thrushes put paid to our harvesting them. By September none were left.

Of the flora at Glencotho, there are many common species such as Tormentil *Potentilla erecta*, Lady's Smock *Cardamine pratensis*, Self-heal *Prunella vulgaris*, Lesser Stitchwort *Stellaria graminea* and many others, none of which, apart from Meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria*, grows in profusion. The rarer flora such as Cloudberry *Rubus chamaemorus*, Blaeberry *Vaccinium myrtillus* and Hair's-tail Cottongrass *Eriophorum vaginatum* and many more too numerous to mention, grow near the summits of the surrounding hills. Our son Guy has now begun a project in categorising edible flora in the area, which will continue into next summer.

Unlike Wiltshire, Glencotho estate has been slow in revealing its wildlife, particularly the fauna, which is not surprising considering Man's rather ruthless past encroachment. Diary-keeping has proved invaluable. In four years we have learned much, not least patience and to be observant.



A CHARM of GOLDFINCHES

seen here at Glencotho and
at the Tayside Reed Beds in May



THREE INTERESTING PLANT GALL FINDS FOR THE YEAR

Jane Squirrell and Graham French

Early in May we visited Bradfield Woods, an ancient woodland managed by Suffolk Wildlife Trust. Our main aim was to look at the large display of Oxlips *Primula elatior*, present in the wood. What, however, did catch our eye was a white structure covered with lots of holes on the stem of a bramble. Initially we thought it must be a small wasp's nest, but on closer inspection we saw it was actually a swelling of the bramble's stem, and as such must be a plant gall. The gall was duly pocketed and taken home for closer inspection. Using the Field Studies Council's book *British Plant Galls* the gall causer was easily identified as a small black Gall Wasp *Diastrophus rubi* (Hymenoptera).

In August, while on a trip to a Hertfordshire Wildlife Trust reserve, we came across a large Oak tree that was absolutely laden with Knopper galls. This undoubtedly must have greatly affected the fecundity of the tree. The gall is a distinctive mass of ridged tissue that projects from the side of an acorn. It is caused by the Gall Wasp *Andricus quercuscalicis*. What we hadn't realised was that, while this is a common plant gall, it only occurs on Pedunculate Oak *Quercus robur* and that it is relatively new to the British Isles, having been introduced to Britain in the 1960s. Even so, it is only able to thrive and complete its life cycle in the UK because of the planting of the non-native Turkey Oak *Quercus cerris*, which was introduced into Britain in the 18th century.

In September we were on the trail of Britain's native Black Poplar (*Populus nigra ssp betulifolia*). Mottley Meadows NNR, in Staffordshire, is well known for its large majestic specimen of *P. nigra* and we made a special trip to see it (a bit of plant twitching). What we also found was that on the petioles of most of the lower leaves was a spirally-coiled swelling. The 2-3 twists to this gall identified its cause as a woolly aphid called *Pemphigus spyrothecae*. This aphid gall is not specific to *Populus nigra ssp betulifolia* but can be found on other subspecies, cultivars and hybrids of *P. nigra*.

Looking for plant galls has been great fun this year. Although they are more abundant the further south you go, there are still plenty to be found in Scotland. If you know what plant the gall is on, and if you use the Field Studies Council's Aidgap key, there is a good chance that the gall causer can be identified.

British Plant Galls: Field Studies Council Aidgap guide 270 by Margaret Redfern, Peter Shirley and Michael Bloxham.

GALL on POPLAR
caused by the woolly Aphid *Pemphigus spyrothecae*

Two or three twists on the petiole



Eric had the knack of catching people, who although not named, were easily identified !



This was Dorothy, having triumphantly reached the top of the Three Brethern in 1999.



Molly enjoying a snooze.

FORTH ISLAND SEABIRD COUNTS 2008

Bill Bruce

Fulmar: In recent years the Fulmar reached its peak in 1997 with 2,045 apparently occupied sites (AOS) counted. Since then numbers have declined and only 1,159 AOS were counted this year. The only island showing a slight increase was May Isle - up by 12 AOS (4%).

Cormorant: In 2004 the Forth islands were home to 400 breeding pairs. Since then numbers have been falling steadily and this year only 259 apparently occupied nests (AON) were counted. Compared to last year, numbers on Haystack increased, Inchkeith remained the same while the other islands all showed decreases.

Shag: In recent years, this species reached a peak of 1,794 AON in 2003. Since then breeding numbers have dropped and this year saw only 1,061 AON. May Isle and Lamb showed increases on last year, while numbers dropped on the other islands.

Great Black-backed Gull: In 1995 all islands were counted giving a total of only 20 breeding pairs. Unlike other species, there has been a steady increase in subsequent years. This year the count for all islands was 60 AON. The central part of Craigleith was not fully covered because the count had to be brought to a quick end as the weather rapidly deteriorated. The actual total might therefore be higher.

Lesser Black-backed Gull: This species was only counted on five islands this year. Of these, it is only May Isle which has significant numbers, and here there was a 17% increase in breeding numbers.

Herring Gull: Again, this species is only counted on a few islands. Numbers on Carr Craig and Haystack remained similar to last year, while on Inchgarvie numbers doubled, and on May Isle numbers increased by about 4%.

Kittiwake: Last year we reported that Kittiwake numbers were up from 4,961 AON to 5,164 AON. This year we counted 4,962 AON. Even though the number of nests on each island is quite different, this is back to within 1 nest of the 2006 total.

Terns: For the last few years, Common Tern numbers have been averaging around 200 AON each year. Last year's increase was wiped out, as numbers returned to 196 AON this year, i.e. 2 nests fewer than in 2006. Similarly the number of Arctic Terns fell to 511 AON (4 nests fewer than in 2006). Roseate Terns increased from 1 to 2 AON and a single Sandwich Tern nest was counted this year.

Razorbill: In 2005 there was a peak count of over 4,300 AOS but since then there has been a steady decline, resulting in this year's count of 3,174 AOS. This decline has been seen on all islands except Lamb and Inchkeith, which both saw small increases.

Guillemot: In 2001 there were nearly 38,000 individual Guillemots counted on the nesting ledges. Since then there has been a steady decline. Although this year's count of 23,600 birds is only two-thirds of the 2001 figure, it is up by about 12% on last year.

Puffin: We do not count Puffins on most of the islands. The figures we note are just the birds we notice as we go around the islands. On May Isle a count is done roughly every five years, and this year's figure of 42,000 apparently occupied burrows (AOB) is well down on the 2003 count of 69,300 AOB. On Craigleith where work continues to try and reduce the problems caused by Tree Mallow, the feeling is that more Puffins are returning to the island to try and breed. We may try to count them next year!

Thanks are due to the Forth Seabird Group for allowing the use of their figures.



SUMMARY of SEABIRD COUNTS for the FORTH ISLANDS 2008

x = present but no count, 0 = none breeding, AOS = apparently occupied sites, AOB = apparently occupied burrows, bd=birds

| | BIRD COUNTS | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|-------------|---------|------------|--------------------------|-----------|-------------------|------------|-----------|--------|------------|--------|------------|-------------------|------------------------------|
| | Bass | C'Leith | Lamb | Fidra | Eye br'ty | Inch keith | Carr Craig | Inch colm | Haystk | Inch Mckry | Ig/Frb | Long Craig | May | Total |
| Fulmar (AOS) | 43 | 86 | 7-8 | 160 | | 248 | 0 | 124 | 0 | 23 | 175 | | 293 | 1,159 |
| Cormorant (nests) | 0 | 41 | 73 | 0 | | 93 | 20 | 0 | 32 | 0 | 0 | | | 259 |
| Shag (nests) | 22 | 133 | 97 | 146 | | 161 | 13 | 7 | 0 | 55 | 0 | | 427 | 1,061 |
| Gannet (nests) | x | 0 | 0 | 0 | | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | | 0 | 0 |
| Eider (nests) | 5+ | x | x | 8 | | x | 4 | 50+ | 0 | 33 | 71 | 11 | 1,088 | 1,270 |
| Great B-b Gull (nests) | | 10+ | 2-3 | 2 | | 5 | 1 | 1 | 1 | ? | 1 | | 37 | 60 |
| Lesser B-b Gull (nests) | 3+ | x | x | x | | x | c3 | x | 3 | x | c17 | | c1,944 | 1,970 |
| Herring Gull (nests) | x | x | x | x | | x | c51 | x | c8 | x | c202 | | c2,962 | 3,223 |
| Kittiwake (nests) | 323 | 513 | 110 | 222 | | 352 | 0 | 88 | 0 | 0 | 0 | | 3,354 | 4,962 |
| Common Tern (nests) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | c90-100 | c101 | 197 |
| Arctic Tern (nests) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | c511 | c511 |
| Roseate Tern (nests) | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 2 |
| Sandwich Tern (nests) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | | 1 | 1 |
| Razorbill(pairs/sites) | 85 | 147 | 80 | 95 | | 62 | 0 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 | | 3,464bd c2,700 | 3,174 |
| Guillemot | c1,600 | c1,550 | c2,900 | 403 | | 28 | 0 | 1 on land | 0 | 0 | 0 | | 17,157 | 23,638 |
| Puffin (birds unless otherwise stated) | a few | | 51 on land | 50 on land 270 at sea | | 646 on land & sea | | 36 on sea | | 1 on land | | | c42,000 AOB | c42,000 AOB + 1,054 birds |
| | | x | | | | | 0 | | 0 | | 0 | | | |

THE HEAD GARDENER'S COTTAGE

On Peter Tothill's walk in January 2007 we visited what had once been a beautiful cottage in Haddington Place. To us it presented a sad sight, after having suffered years of neglect.

In 1763 the Regius Keeper, Dr. John Hope, secured a site on Leith Walk for the Botanic Garden and between 1763 and 1765 the cottage was built by John Adam. The ground floor was the Head Gardener's residence and the upper Dr. Hope's lecture room, which could accommodate over 200 students.

We noted in that year's Journal that the Friends of Hopetoun Crescent Gardens had embarked on a rescue plan. A project group was set up in April 2007 to see if something could be done at least to carry out archaeological research on the site. An application for a Heritage Lottery Fund grant was successful and with great support from the developers and the demolition team, the cottage has been carefully researched and dismantled. All the numbered stones and timbers now lie at Inverleith, awaiting the next stage. It is hoped that after another fund-raising project the cottage will be rebuilt and put to good use at RBGE.

Lyn Blades

BIODIVERSITY AT HOUND POINT
David Adamson

Since 2001 I have been recording Field Gentians at Hound Point on the Dalmeny Estate, for the Lothian Biodiversity Project. This has involved walking from the Hawes Inn end of South Queensferry to Hound Point at some time in late July or early August, and counting the individual flowering and non-flowering plants of Field Gentian *Gentianella campestris* at their only site in West Lothian. The plants are annuals, and their main stronghold is the heavily-grazed turf around a rock outcrop, with individual plants straggling south and west from there along the sides of paths. The sandy northern part of the Point is home to Burnet Rose *Rosa pimpinellifolia* and Lesser Meadow Rue *Thalictrum minus*, and blocks of long grass and bracken exclude Gentians from the other areas.

In the eight years of the Survey the number of plants has varied as shown in this table:

| YEAR | NUMBER | COMMENTS | OTHER SPECIES |
|------|--------|-----------------------------------|---------------------|
| 2001 | 131 | Not many in flower | |
| 2002 | 451 | – | Rhinanthus minor |
| 2003 | 89 | Many small and unlikely to flower | |
| 2004 | 20 | – | 3 Green Woodpeckers |
| 2005 | 36 | Plus 18 dead from drought | |
| 2006 | 0 | – | |
| 2007 | 0 | – | |
| 2008 | 480+ | Most in flower; healthy plants | |

Hound Point is a popular viewpoint for birdwatchers. Rabbits graze the turf and bracken dominates large parts of the Point. The Gentian population spreads south from the centre of the Point to the main entrance, and must be at risk from trampling. The rabbits seem to leave it alone, and the bracken dislikes the thin soil where the Gentians grow. However, the main threat to its survival seems to be drought. Two barren years followed an exceptionally hot and dry spell in 2005, such that I thought that the population had disappeared altogether and that future surveys would be futile. The unexpected reappearance of the plants in huge numbers in 2008 proves that the seeds are viable for several years; probably some have survived since the previous wonder year of 2002. The damp spring of 2008 had probably spurred the germination of old seeds; 2007 had been drier until summer. In 2008 the Gentians were absent from some path-sides that had previously hosted small populations. In particular, the plants no longer range down the western slope to a grassy hollow.

The Point has lost the Hay Rattle *Rhinanthus minor*; it is too conspicuous a plant to have survived unnoticed. However, its other unusual residents, such as Moonwort *Botrychium lunaria*, Cowslip *Primula veris* and Purple Milk Vetch *Astragalus danicus* still cling on. Hound Point is also worth a visit for its good range of Bumble Bees and Fungi. I expect the Gentians to reappear in 2009 and thereafter, but it would perhaps be prudent to establish another population elsewhere as a seed bank in case the Hound Point plants do succumb some day.

JACKDAWS

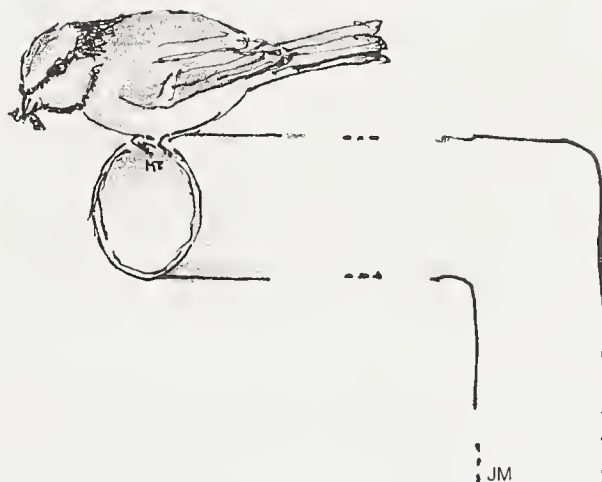
Corvids are among the earliest birds to breed; Rooks are usually busy repairing their old nests by the beginning of March, and Crows and Magpies are starting new ones soon afterwards. But it was the antics of Jackdaws which attracted my attention last year. On February 4, walking along the Innocent Cycle Path I noticed a pair inspecting a hole in a tree just over the wall. And on February 9 pairs were not only checking out the hollow trees in the Hermitage woodlands high on Blackford Hill, but one pair was busy mating. (Incidentally the hollow trees are easy to see in winter and are conveniently marked with white crosses.) There was plenty of activity when I passed the Blackford nest sites again on 3 March and again on 4 April, by which time Crows were building in a nearby field. By 8 May the trees and shrubs were leafing up, so it was getting more difficult to see the nest holes. But there are plenty of Jackdaws in the area at any time of year and I have the feeling they are generally on the increase.

Jackie Muscott

VERSATILE BLUE TITS

Blue Tits like to nest in holes, so when I was crossing the Meadows last April I was not greatly surprised to see one going into a hole in a tree with a feather. Stopping at a layby on the A6 just south of Penrith in June I was only a little surprised to see Blue Tits dotting into and out of a dry stone wall, presumably feeding young. But just a few days before, I had seen something that really did surprise me. In Blackford Glen, at the entrance to the old quarry now used by the works department, stood an old metal lamp-post without a lamp. It had a horizontal bar, presumably an open cylinder, and out of the corner of my eye I thought I saw something fly into it. It soon became clear that Blue Tits had a nest inside. The lamp post has now gone, and I like to think it was left until the young had fledged.

Jackie Muscott



LOOK OUT FOR BEARS !

Salmonberry *Rubus spectabilis* can be a very invasive plant, and I believe they are trying to deal with it on Corstorphine Hill. Introduced as a garden shrub, it has rather attractive downward-facing, deep pink flowers in the spring, raspberry-like leaves and weak prickles on the stem. In summer it produces salmon-coloured raspberry-like fruit and I was very surprised to see a lot of it when walking with a friend near Red Moss in July last year. It lined the road between Marchbanks and East Rigg. My friend had spent time in western Canada where the plant is native, and she assured me that bears are extremely fond of the fruits. So watch out on Corstorphine Hill - it is quite near the zoo!

Jackie Muscott



SALMONBERRY
Rubus spectabilis

The orange fruits loved by Bears

A NORTH AMERICAN RASPBERRY AT WEST LINTON

On an excursion in 1901 a shrub was seen, which was pretty widely distributed in the locality. The following year the plant was confirmed as *Rubus spectabilis*. "The fruits very similar in size and shape to the common Raspberry of our garden but dark yellow or amber coloured, somewhat astringent, and is said to make excellent tarts. (Has anyone tried them?) The presence of this North American Raspberry *Rubus spectabilis* is very interesting, and the plant is likely to continue to spread if not interfered with".

..... and in 2002

Salmonberry *Rubus spectabilis* naturalised in policy woodland, spreading and being considered as a troublesome weed!

ENCOUNTERS WITH ANIMALS

Animals can be a pleasure or a pain to a botanist on the loose. I've had several wonderful moments coming upon wild animals - young foxes, playful stoats, a pine marten once on a misty mountain, and white hares on the hill above Hopes Reservoir only last February. And stalking Ptarmigan can be fun; they move just fast enough to keep at a safe distance while one of their number takes up a watching brief on a convenient rock.

But sometimes animals can be a real nuisance - a field full of bored teenage cattle for instance. The presence of a botanist is an interesting novelty. They like to gallop over for a better look, and even better if the botanist takes to his heels. Dogs can be a mixed blessing. Botanists go at a boringly slow pace, and when they bend down to look at something do not seem to appreciate a friendly paw, or a damp nose.

I once allowed a dog to accompany us on a Kindrogan course. It was quite well-behaved most of the time, though it did expect a Kindrogan sausage for lunch, and its face was a picture when somebody actually ate one rather than handing it over. But on the last day it blotted its copybook. First it turned up with a young rabbit, which was released unharmed, though its screams were blood-curdling. Then it presented us with a pheasant's egg, equally undamaged, at which point it got taken off for a good walk. A nice reward for bad behaviour, but maybe it deserved it after a week of slow and stop.

Another hazard is a dog which decides to join you for a walk. All right if it knows the way home, otherwise you have a disposal problem at the end of the day.

To be joined by a companionable duck is more unusual. It happened to Mary Clarkson and me on a holiday in Ireland. It was a female Mallard. It declined our sandwiches, but ambled along beside us for some distance, pecking at the wet vegetation. Maybe we were disturbing some tasty insects.

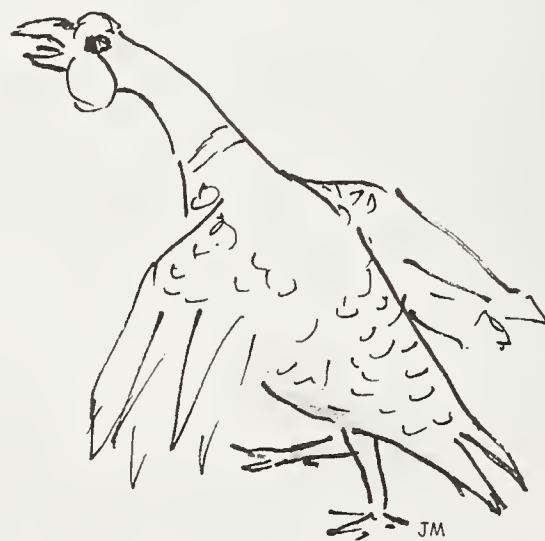
It was on the same holiday that we were attacked by a Roe Deer. It snuck up behind us when we were eating our lunch and stole a half-eaten banana. Mary said it looked very funny with a banana-skin hanging out of its mouth, but I didn't think it quite so amusing when it trampled my arm to get at my sandwich. We had to pick up the remains of our lunch and flee. Very embarrassing.

Not so embarrassing as being routed by a Pheasant however; three of us, armed with sticks, were botanising along the River Findhorn when we encountered a scruffy-looking male pheasant (it was moulting and had lost its tail), and were surprised when it didn't fly away. We were even more surprised when it started to follow us, and unpleasantly surprised when it started to attack us. We gave it several hefty whacks with our sticks, but it was undeterred. We could not concentrate on the botany and moved on. The wretched bird accompanied us back to the car, and having seen us off the premises, threw back its head, flapped its wings and crowed in triumph.

Of course midges are even smaller, and can be just as successful!

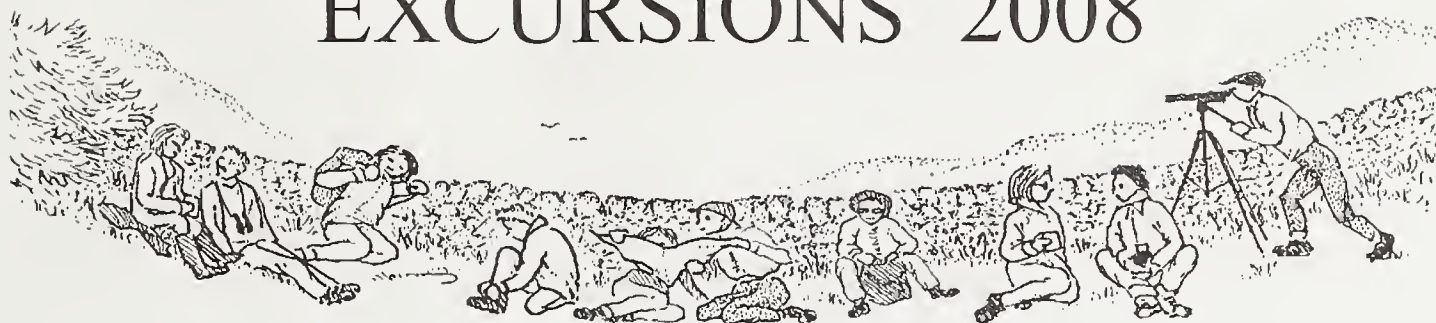
Jackie Muscott

The wretched bird threw back its head,
flapped its wings and crowed in triumph.



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EXCURSIONS 2008



| | DATE | PLACE | LEADER |
|----------|----------------|-----------------------------|-------------------|
| January | 19th | Vogie Country Park | Neville Crowther |
| February | 16th | Walk by the Union Canal | Lyn Blades |
| March | 15th-16th | Caerlaverock Wetland Centre | |
| April | 12th | Cullaloe SWT Reserve | Neville Crowther |
| May | 3rd | Loch Leven Heritage Trail | Committee Members |
| | 10th | Tay Reed Beds | Tom Delaney |
| | 14th Wednesday | Dalkeith Park | Cameron Manson |
| | 17th | River Avon Heritage Trail | Jackie Muscott |
| | 21st Wednesday | Trinity Railway Walk | Heather McHaffie |
| | 24th | Esk River Walk | Mary Tebble |
| | 28th Wednesday | Craiglockhart Hill | Molly Woolgar |
| | 31st | Loch Ardsinning | Joanie McNaughton |
| June | 4th Wednesday | Holyrood Park | Natalie Taylor |

WHARFEDALE Monday 9th - Friday 13th June

| | | | |
|-----------|----------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| | 18th Wednesday | Union Canal to Bypass | Margaret Perry |
| | 21st | Inchcailloch, Loch Lomond | Ian C McCallum |
| | 25th Wednesday | West Linton | Janet Watson |
| | 28th | Borestane, East Cairns | Michael Jones |
| July | 2nd Wednesday | Puffin Cruise | RSPB |
| | 5th | Tulach Hill, Blair Atholl | Jackie Muscott and Mary Clarkson |
| | 6th Sunday | Cockmuir - Toxside | Richard Buckland |
| | 12th | Greenlaw Kaims | Michael Braithwaite |
| | 19th | Glenholm | Eric and Eileen Perry |
| | 26th | Dunkeld Cally Loch | John Watson |
| August | 2nd | Whitlaw Moss NNR | Jeff Waddell |
| | 9th | Aqueduct - Almondell | Andrew Gilchrist |
| | 16th | Fairy Castle Dean | Mary Clarkson |
| | 23rd | Roxburgh - Kelso | Lyn Blades |
| | 30th | Musselburgh Lagoons | Bill Clunie |
| September | 6th | Fungus for beginners Heriot Watt | Eunice Smith |
| | 20th | Cove, Berwickshire | Neville Crowther |
| | 27th | Bowhill Country Park | Mike Richardson |
| October | 11th | St Baldred's Cradle | Chris Ellis and Brian Upton |
| November | 15th | Glenkinnon Burn | Jean Murray |
| December | 29th | River Almond | Janet Watson |



EXCURSIONS 2008



VOGRIE COUNTRY PARK

Date 9th January
Leader Neville Crowther

Nuthatches, where, oh where were you !!! We looked for you here, we looked for you there, we sought you everywhere you ought to be, we searched for you high, we searched for you low. But though you remained elusive, we did find a most pleasurable excitement searching for you bonnie vocalists behind your hiding place - a row of shrubby low trees/bushes - and also where a home was provided for you by your human carers. Though they are one of Vogrie's star species, no sightings were recorded by us. Neville Crowther last saw them here in the early years of this decade. Nuthatches have a black eye-stripe, white throat, slate-grey upper parts and buff underneath. They have a remarkable range of call-notes. Their behavioural habits include climbing down trees head first and wedging nuts in tree barks and then cracking them open with their 'hatchet' bills. One bird which we saw was a Buzzard silhouetted across the main river (the Tyne Water), perched high up in the woodland canopy on the far bank. That was so exciting and a great thrill to me.



THE ELUSIVE NUTHATCH

Moving to the many woodland parts of the park, we came to a most beautiful Sessile Oak tree *Quercus petraea* (not to be confused with the Pedunculate Oak *Quercus robur*) standing next to the path and dominating the surrounding woodland on that side of the path. Here Neville explained about a most fascinating aspect of the tree; in July the leaves of an Oak become very tattered and holed, because of insect and invertebrate activity. The Oak then compensates for this by producing a new flush of leaves, especially on juvenile trees. Now this is what is called *Lammas* growth. Why the term *Lammas*? Natural history and folklore now combine. This growth takes place around the time of the Celtic festival of the first fruits, the *Lammas* festival, which is 1st August; hence these are the *Lammas* leaves. In such a mild area as ours a few leaves will still be on the trees until December, after the main leaf fall at the end of October.

Another remarkable tree species we looked at was the Common Lime *Tilia x europaea*, belonging to the *Tiliaceae*, where at a distance there appears to be a tremendous bulge of the trunk at its base. At close quarters it looks more like an extremely voluminous entanglement of branches. This growth is not due to parasitic forms of life or disease but owes its origin to some juvenile cells in a particular layer under the bark acting differently from normal, producing suckers. This behaviour is particularly common in this hybrid Lime and may occasionally be found in Oak trees. There was also a dense coniferous plantation alongside the Vogrie Burn.

As we crossed the Tyne Water, little did we know what a surprise was coming to us. What's that strange, alien-looking plant ahead of us, we thought?!! Not a trifid, but a plant of Greater Tussock Sedge *Carex paniculata*. It was enormous, a most strange-looking thing. It formed an extremely solid, squat bulk of a brown base starkly visible above ground level. From the top of that base sprouted a most amazingly spectacular flourishing mass of green stems. It was a most interesting sight to behold, and was in splendid isolation, in a sea of coarse grass.

Vogrie is a site of many ever-changing habitats as one strolls along, which makes this one of Scotland's especially scenic and pleasant landscapes to amble through, breathing the fresh, clean refreshing air. So many habitats - parkland, a closely-packed garden shrub and bush area, fields, one or two ponds in one wood, a formal lake, small burns, a major river (the Tyne Water), steep-sided ravines with steeply-graded paths, woodlands of all types, scrubland, a coppiced-type area next to Vogrie Burn, riverside meadows, elevated river meadows, a woodland full of moss-covered trunks and, on the home stretch, a tree-lined avenue at the top of the slope above the main river - filled our excursion with pleasure. To me this was so striking. We were enjoyably spoilt with so much to see. The coppiced area used to be commercial, but is no longer so. What is seen now is a restored coppicing to demonstrate what a coppiced area looks like and to regenerate that habitat type. The coppiced trees are Alder. The commercial use was to provide a charcoal source. Incidentally, Alder and Birch are of the same family, *Betulaceae*.

Roddy Clark

I took information from the *Tree for Life* web site. RC

WALK BY THE UNION CANAL

CULLALOE SWT RESERVE

Date 16th February
Leader Lyn Blades

Date 12th April
Leader Neville Crowther



Having gathered by the Union Canal at Winchburgh on a sunny winter's morning, seventeen Nats set off along the towpath in the direction of Linlithgow. After a short distance we made our way into woods, where a narrow path leads along the top of a high ridge between the Canal and the railway.

There was evidence of bird activity in the trees. The little ones spotted included Goldcrest, Treecreeper and Long-tailed Tit, and the much larger Jay was first heard and then seen. As it was February, there were no flowers to be seen, but it was good to find leaves of some interesting woodland species, such as Wood Sanicle *Sanicula europaea* and Wood Sedge *Carex sylvatica* by the path, and see Hard Shield Fern *Polystichum aculeatum* among the trees. Hart's Tongue Fern *Phyllitis scolopendrium* was growing happily all along the wall of a drainage ditch at the bottom of the slope by the towpath.

Although there were no flowers, there were still berries on the Holly *Ilex aquifolium*, adding some colour to the scene. Near Winchburgh Jackie also spotted the roundish fruits on a London Plane *Platanus x hispanica*, a tree sometimes planted in towns and policy woodlands, but rare in the Lothians.

As we reached the end of our ridge walk we came upon an odd collection of wooden structures – bridges and ramps, now in a poor state of repair, lying at all angles – which we could only assume was the remains of an obstacle course for cyclists. The trees have taken over.

Descending on to a farm track we crossed a railway bridge and made our way north, turning off just before a bridge across the M9. Soon we reached the disused Craighton Quarry where we found a good lunch spot (in the sun!) and sat overlooking the remains of the quarry. There is water in the bottom, but much less than a few years ago. It is still sufficient to support a bed of Reedmace *Typha latifolia* in one area, where Dragonflies can be found in summer. The bird list was increased by Buzzard, Kestrel and Fieldfare, with Greylag passing overhead.

After lunch we wandered past the remains of some old quarry buildings, and made our way to the minor road, which took us across the railway, back to the Canal. Here the party divided. Some returned directly to Winchburgh on the towpath. Others took advantage of the weather and continued along the Canal for a time, before turning and making their way back to our starting point.

It was a lovely day for a winter walk and I am pleased that it was a new route for some of the party.

Lyn Blades

Dorothy Stuart's diligence acquainted us all with the possibility of hold-ups on the Forth Bridge. In the event it was quiet and nineteen of us all arrived in good time. There, on a blustery day with impending showers, we were met by Graham Boath, the new and enthusiastic convenor. He already has a Cullaloe website up and running, and we were featuring in the reserve diary almost before we had crossed back to Edinburgh. A well muffled party listened to Graham's history of the reserve, delivered from the top of the former dam which once had impounded the lower of two reservoirs. Built in 1876 the reservoirs supplied Burntisland with water until the demolition of the larger dam in 1986. From that time Fife Council and SWT have managed the reserve. The site is also an SSSI. Its citation identifies rare water plants such as Water Sedge *Carex aquatilis* and the seldom seen Mudwort *Limosella aquatica*.

Despite the cool conditions many resident birds were in song, waterfowl on the loch were paired and soaring, Buzzards mewed overhead. Brown Hare and Roe Deer were startled into flight by our wanderings. After revealing his intention, Graham flushed half a dozen Snipe from a swampy area behind the dam wall. Early flowering plants included Grey Willows, giving food for the first bumble bees, Butterbur, Coltsfoot, Barren Strawberry, Primroses and hillside Whins. The floor of the former reservoir had become a stony flush, with pools in the lower sections dominated by Reed Sweet Grass *Glyceria maxima*. A scrub of Alder and Willow grew over most of the area with Sedges including Glaucous Sedge *Carex flacca* and Yellow Sedge *C. viridula*, Eyebright *Euphrasia* sp., and a mix of Bryophytes beneath them. Another unusual plant was Wood Small Reed *Calamagrostis epigejus*, which according to the Fife Recorder George Ballantyne, is on the increase.

The SWT 'flying flock' of sheep were temporarily housed in the reserve, whilst the annual lambing was completed. The newly born, from a number of parental breeds, were a source of much interest. During the rest of the year the flock are used as a mobile grazing machine for controlling vegetation growth on a variety of Trust reserves at times dictated by management plans.

By the time we had had lunch under the Pines and returned to our cars, we had visited many habitats including herb rich grassland, Willow carr with pools, scrub and bracken, the loch, mature woodland and managed pasture. This large variety lay in a relatively small area of the Dour Burn valley. Future plans exist to extend the footpath, which at present is linear, to give a loop up the steep eastern side of the reserve, returning to the car park by the old spillway. We look forward to its completion for our next visit.

Neville Crowther



OH DEAR! IT'S THESE MOBILE GRAZING MACHINES AGAIN! EP

LOCH LEVEN HERITAGE TRAIL

Date 3rd May
Leaders Committee Members

We are grateful to our veteran member Connie Stewart who alerted the Excursion Committee to this new walk, which starts from Kinross. The plan is to build a pathway round the perimeter of Loch Leven but at present only the northern side of the loch is completed, a three mile stretch from Kirkgate Park, beside the walls of Kinross House, to the Pow Burn. The level path is wide and well surfaced, passing through woodland and wet grassland, with wooden bridges across a number of small burns. At Pow Burn the path turns north-east towards Channel Farm and Loch Leven's Larder, just west of Wester Balgeddie. This is the only climb of the way (all of 20 metres!) and it can be quite muddy to reach the café and farm shop for refreshments; but well worth it!

Twenty-two members set out from the Pier beside the watch tower, which overlooks a small cemetery where Good Friday Grass or Field Woodrush *Luzula campestris* and Thale Cress *Arabidopsis thaliana* were found and Robin, Chaffinch and Goldfinch seen. At the pier reed bed Coot, Heron, Great Crested Grebe, displaying Tufted Duck, and Willow Warbler were seen and a Swallow flying low.

Loch Leven Nature Reserve is home to more breeding ducks than anywhere else in inland Europe, so many species were seen, including Mallard, Goldeneye, 2 Gadwall, Goosander. I missed others, but 8 Greylag and 3 Pink Footed Geese were seen, a Heronry on a small island, a nesting Oystercatcher, Redshanks, an island of Cormorants, a Buzzard, a Sparrowhawk, and even an Osprey flying north. Among the smaller birds Reed Bunting, Sedge Warbler, Pied Wagtail, Great Tit, Thrush, Blackcap, Willow Warbler and Yellowhammer were noted throughout the day, as well as our more common birds such as Wren, Blackbird, a Starling gathering sheep's wool and singing Skylarks. Migrant Swallows, House Martins and a Swift were seen by keener eyes than mine.

The damp wall by Kinross House, shaded by trees, was thick with mosses, Wall Rue and Maidenhair Spleenwort, while on the ground were Yellow Archangel *Lamium galeobdolon*, Yellow Figwort *Scrophularia vernalis*, Figwort *S. nodosa*, a carpet of Celandines *Ranunculus ficaria* - some with two different rusts on the leaves - Pink Purslane *Claytonia sibirica* and Ground Ivy *Glechoma hederacea*. There were lots of Daffodils and some Bluebells. We were vexed to note that vandals had cut the wire of the protective fence and had driven a vehicle to uproot one of the main posts.

Woodland was mostly Birch and Willow with a few Oaks, and Balsam Poplar with its lovely scent and female catkins.

The find of the day was Holy Grass *Hierochloa odorata*, an early flowering species of wet grasslands and quite rare. It is known as Vanilla Grass in North America and named Holy Grass because in some parts of Prussia it was dedicated to the Virgin Mary and strewn before the doors of churches on festival days. So I read on Page 267 *Grasses* by C E Hubbard.

Mary Robertson



The find of the day - HOLY GRASS *Hierochloa odorata*

BIRD SONG OF THE TAYSIDE REED BEDS

Date 10th May
Leader Tom Delaney

Nats member Tom Delaney organised an opportunity to visit the Tayside reed beds. Through the assistance of RSPB warden Hannah Morton the Nats group of 19 were able to access this RSPB reserve, a site which is not encouraged or publicised for the public to visit.

There was a hazy start to the day whilst we congregated at Inchtute but this was to burn off soon after our arrival at the estuary.

Within the monoculture of the Tayside reed beds it became clear how precious the existing ecosystem is, primarily to sustain bird diversity. This 410 hectare site is the largest continuous reed bed in the UK and it is a Site of Special Scientific Interest. Until 2005 it was a profitable reed bed business, with the reeds being harvested for thatching material. However, due to considerable competition with Eastern Europe and Scandinavia, the reed harvesting has ceased and only conservation clearance is carried out, from January to March, to encourage nesting areas for birds.

On entering the reserve there was a Yellowhammer on telephone wires. Like other buntings they perch on bushes and wires to deliver their song. Their simple and repetitive song - *a little bit of bread and no cheeeeeeese* - is to be heard at intervals throughout the summer.

Still at the entrance to the reserve a Whitethroat was seen caught up in a ringer's mist net; by the end of our day's walk this Warbler had thankfully been released.

Nearby to the captured Whitethroat, a Ring Ouzel offered a clear shrilling *pee-u*. This sooty black member of the Thrush family with its white crescent upon its breast seemed wary of our presence. Three Goldfinch were spotted; a flock of these birds is appropriately called a 'charm'. The tinkling, bell-like call is a pretty liquid twittering. The broad yellow bar on black wing, and its white rump helped us identify this bird in flight.

As well as the sightings of common garden birds such as Chaffinch, Wren and Great Tit, we saw the Grasshopper Warbler. It is able to throw its voice by turning its head from side to side, and this caused me difficulty in marking its location. Its distinct call is like the sound of a fishing line being cast.

Another warbler spotted was the Willow Warbler, with its soft cadence of liquid notes. The taxing migration of this warbler may account for the apparent curious distinctive moulting, replacing its plumage twice a year.

The party ventured intrepidly through an oily and boggy pathway. The mingling scent of coconut and almond from the Whin in bloom greeted us en route.

Butterflies sighted on this sun-filled day included the Peacock, Small Tortoiseshell, Green-veined White and Orange Tip.

A female Bearded Reedling was twitched. The adult female with its brown head lacks the black beard-like moustache of the male. Its song is a far-carrying *ching ching ching*. Also known as the Bearded Tit, the 'reedling' part of the name refers to the reed beds it inhabits.

A male Reed Bunting was sitting up for us; a white collar, a moustached streak and black head makes this bunting distinct. This bird delivers a chirruping song, a *cheep cheep cheep chizzup* and along with this call there was a flick of the tail before it flew off to another clump of reeds. Distribution of this bunting, according to research, has increased from reed beds to drier places such as farm hedgerows, scrub and forestry plantations.

The illusive Sedge Warbler proved hard to spot, only offering a brief glimpse, but a chattering described by our Nats President, Neville Crowther, as *scratchy scratchy whistle whistle* aided us in realising it was present in the reeds. Apparently the song of the Sedge Warbler can be interspersed with its accurate mimicry of other bird song.

Other birds seen included 4 Herons, a Crow, a Cormorant and 6 Shelducks. Above us the call of the Skylark was to be heard, a sustained melodic warbling song, offered conspicuously in flight. A Song Thrush with its speckled front was seen. This bird is renowned for its repeated musical phrases.

We were further fortunate to see a Marsh Harrier soaring. Wings as it glided past were held in a shallow v-shape. If viewed closer, the young and the female have pale shoulders. Because of persecution in the 20th century, this bird is now rare.

After being shown a Sweet Briar *Rosa rubiginosa*, which is a fragrant rose with an apple scent from the brown glands on its leaves, we were to see a Roe Deer pose for us and then spring into the surrounding scrub close to the reed beds.

Thanks to Hannah, Tom and all the Nats members for making the trip to Tayside reed beds such a memorable day.

Chris Macefield



YELLOWHAMMER on the telephone wires

DALKEITH PARK

Date 14th May
Leader Cameron Manson

Our leader, Cameron Manson, is manager of the Country Park and is obviously interested in and enthusiastic about the estate. By using what was for us an unusual method of transport - a trailer (not the most comfortable of vehicles!) - he was able to show us many different areas.

Our first stop was down towards the river to see the Bluebell Wood. The wood is mainly made up of Spanish (Sweet) Chestnut and Beech. The Spanish Chestnuts were planted because of a demand from the British Navy for their wood but it is not now known why they wanted it. In the wood we noticed a lot of Wood Millet *Millium effusum*. It was the most obvious grass as it was in full flower.

On the way back to the trailer by a slightly different route we noticed an Ash with bark covered by an orange alga, and opposite, a Sycamore marked by a coloured band. This Sycamore has been used constantly for propagation by short twigs. The tree was not a beautiful specimen (not nearly as attractive as its neighbour) but apparently it produced long, straight pieces of timber.

As we drove on, Cameron saw ears sticking up in a field so stopped to try to show us a Fox. The field the Fox was in had been taken over by someone hoping to grow trees commercially, but they had failed, so now Cameron hoped to use the field and the young trees in it in an educational capacity.

A large number of Roe Deer inhabit the park and though we did not see any we saw their slots and some of the tracks made by them. We saw a large Badger's sett and on the way to it noticed a yellow slime fungus on a dead branch.

Our last stop was at the Old Wood where a lot of work is being done taking out old trees (or sometimes leaving them to attract insects etc.) and planting new ones. The area between the North and South Esks is famed for its fine Oak trees many of which are descendants of the ancient Caledonian forest itself. They are very special trees and well worth a visit. In the past some have been coppiced and some multiple-planted. Apart from the Oak the most common tree is the Holly - bird planted. This area was favoured by the Druids and there is said to be a Druid 'Temple' - in the wood. Altogether it was a most enjoyable and interesting evening.

Betty Mitchelhill

RIVER AVON HERITAGE TRAIL

Date 17th May
Leader Jackie Muscott

A good-sized party gathered in poor weather for the river walk from Westfield to Avonbridge. We were accompanied by Swallows along the track to the river crossing near Wallace's Cave, which we reached in good time. But then there was a bit of a hiatus as one of the party took off in the wrong direction, and had to be recovered. However the pause gave the weather time to improve, and it remained fairish for the rest of the day.

The pause also gave us plenty of time to look around. In the wood the Anemones *Anemone nemorosa* which had starred the ground a couple of weeks before, during the recce, had gone over. They had been replaced by a considerable collection of spring flowers - Ramsons *Allium ursinum*, Bluebells *Hyacinthoides non-scripta*, Wood Sorrel *Oxalis acetosella*, Greater Stitchwort *Stellaria holostea*, Tuberous Comfrey *Symphytum tuberosum*, and Leopard's Bane *Doronicum pardalianches*, all at their best.

In a marshy area over the bridge Bugle *Ajuga reptans*, Marsh Marigold or Kingcups *Caltha palustris* and Cuckoo Flower or Lady's Smock *Cardamine pratensis* made a colourful display. John Watson explained how this area, now marshy and overgrown, had been a meadow when he was a child. It was also the site of an old iron foundry, where cannons for the battle of Waterloo were apparently made.

By this stage of the walk Blackcap, Whitethroat, Chaffinch, Chiffchaff and Wren had all been identified. As we progressed along the path we saw Grey Wagtails in the river and Buzzards overhead. We came upon a Badger sett right beside the path, and Deer hair (presumably Roe) on a barbed wire fence. Across the river Bird Cherry blossom *Prunus padus* formed patches of bridal white.

There were two steep pitches on the path. The first took us up by a small waterfall to an area with convenient rocks and tree-trunks, and a view over the river, and here we enjoyed a rather chilly lunch. On the way up we noticed Wood Puffballs *Lycoperdon pyriforme* on a tree stump.



LYCOPERDON PYRIFORME
WOOD PUFFBALLS on a tree stump

At the second rise, which took us past an old railway viaduct, we came upon St George's Mushrooms *Tricholoma gambosum*, an edible spring fungus. It's supposed to appear on St George's Day, April 23rd, hence the name, so it was only a month late!

Near the viaduct there was also a good patch of hybrid Avens *Geum x intermedium* looking beautifully intermediate between its two parents Water Avens *G. rivale* and Wood Avens *G. urbanum*.

Some of the party turned back at this point, and sadly missed one of the highlights of the day - a Goosander with about 12 chicks. She was proceeding towards us at a stately pace until she realised there was a large party of humans on the bank ahead. She hesitated, turned back, dithered, and then came on again at a steady pace until she got level with us. Then she took off at high speed, her startled flotilla of ducklings struggling to keep up!

Further on we came upon a Heron fishing and House Martins gathering mud for their nests. Some Blackthorn *Prunus spinosa* was still in flower, as was Broom *Cytisus scoparius*, and Bitter Vetch *Lathyrus linifolius* by the river. But we were soon on the last lap to Avonbridge where a car had been left, so drivers were quickly returned to Westfield, and before long everyone was on the way home after a very pleasant walk. Thanks also to John Watson who got us off to a good start by directing people to the parking place.

Jackie Muscott

TRINITY RAILWAY WALK
The Edinburgh Cycle-path network

Date 21st May
Leader Heather McHaffie

Cyclists will be well aware of the extensive network of cycle-paths that make use of the old railway line routes. These paths are just as good for walkers and a rich variety of species of plants can be found on the well-vegetated embankments. On an evening in May a group of us visited only a small part of the network starting from the Clark Road entrance. This small area illustrates many of the sources of interest to be found across Edinburgh. On the sides of the embankment are a mixture of native species and the inevitable large proportion of alien plants that have colonised this disturbed area. There are spreads of Few-flowered Leek *Allium paradoxum* there in the spring, followed by enormous stands of the gigantic Busy Lizzie *Impatiens glandulifera* better known as Himalayan Balsam. This is the fastest growing annual in Britain and certainly easily reaches 2 metres, with stout stems bearing the flowers like (English) policeman's helmets and explosive seed pods.

A wide stretch of straight cycle-path by Heriot's playing fields is part of the Millennium Forest and has a planted mixture of native species with Blackthorn or Sloe *Prunus spinosa*, on one side of the path usefully contrasted with Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* on the other. Wide swathes of Cow Parsley *Anthriscus sylvestris* line the paths, most of which are conveniently surfaced in tarmac. The observant might spot Greater Burnet Saxifrage *Pimpinella major* along this stretch later in the year and there is the inevitable Giant Hogweed *Heracleum mantegazzianum* which the Council sprays from time to time. To the north of this part there are some extensive areas of woodland growing over long-disused sidings, smothered in ivy, with pools and meandering ditches in areas which presumably are no longer so well drained. Some of the ditches run alongside the cycle-paths and there are areas where water seeps from the side of the embankment creating flushes. It is sometimes difficult to remember where you are on the cycle-paths as the world above seems far away. Only the rumbling traffic and an advertising hoarding indicate the presence of Ferry Road as you negotiate the puddles to cross underneath. The south side of this Ferry Road bridge is under a gloomy canopy of tall Ash trees and is an especially good spot for fungi. Further south the sidings open out and give an elevated view of the allotments. The cycle-paths lead down to the Water of Leith and merge into the riverside walkway which is another route well worth repeated visits with a good chance of seeing Kingfishers. The paths are popular with dog-walkers so some care must be exercised in longer grass, but on a summer's day these paths have a lot to offer and are well worth investigating. The council organises volunteers to cut back selected areas and allow native herbaceous plants to flourish, and there is a sown meadow near Trinity School which has a good mixture of species including Meadow Cranesbill *Geranium pratense* and the Cowslip *Primula veris*. These paths are ideal as an easily accessed resource for groups looking at commoner species and are deservedly much used by groups of students from the Botanic Garden.

Heather McHaffie

ESK RIVER

Date 24th May
Leader Mary Tebble



Chiffchaff

The River Esk Walk in Musselburgh provides a very pleasant stroll on a day in late May. The riverside paths lead between banks of colourful plants, such as Dame's Violet *Hesperis matronalis*, Leopard's Bane *Doronicum pardalianches*, Red Campion *Silene dioica*, Wild Garlic (or Ramsons) *Allium ursinum*, and dotted with the occasional Forget-me-not *Myosotis arvensis* and Bluebell *Hyacinthoides non-scripta*. We saw four species of Stitchwort: the tiny Bog *Stellaria*

uliginosa, Greater *S. holostea* and Wood *S. nemorum*, with broader leaves and deeper-cut petals (seeming to double their number) and, further up the river-bank, Lesser *S. graminea*, which has smaller flowers than Greater, but larger than Bog, and is rather straggly and spindly.

At the start of our walk we watched Grey Wagtails: four of them, two being juveniles. A Mistle Thrush flew over the river to perch on a branch nearby before moving on. A Dipper was seen early on, too. Chaffinches and Wrens seemed to be singing everywhere all day long and all along our walk. We saw unusual plants too: Fringe Cups *Tellima grandiflora*, with its attractive fringed flowers, and Pick-a-back Plant *Tolmiea mensiesii* which has spikes of red-brown narrow-petalled flowers with purple-veined sepals. The heart-shaped leaves will have buds at their base in autumn, which provide the reason for the plants unusual name. At the weir, we watched a motionless Heron patiently waiting to catch his midday meal, and again saw Wagtails, Pied as well as Grey.

From here, Sweet Cicely *Myrrhis odorata* clothed the banks and we crushed the white-marked leaves to capture the scent of aniseed. This plant, an umbel, was once used as a salad ingredient because of its unique flavour. South of the weir, we saw Swallows and Sand Martins, with one or two House Martins. Sickie-shaped Swifts flew high against the blue sky. The sun came out and our bodies relaxed in the warmth. A Chiffchaff and Willow Warblers sang and other Warblers too. I heard a snatch of a Whitethroat's scratchy notes and a Blackcap's lovely flute-like melody. At the open grassy area we saw Song Thrushes, and a Blue Tit popped in and out of a wee cranny between stones in the wall which encloses the modern mansions behind it. We all settled to sit and eat our delicious picnics, one o'clock and rumbling tummies coinciding.

We resumed our walk along the winding narrow riverside paths and watched Sand Martins diving into holes between the oblong blocks of a reinforced river bank below the golf course. As we walked, we had some special pleasures: several elegant sprays of Star of Bethlehem *Ornithogalum angustifolium* the blue spikes of Bugle *Ajuga reptans* and little patches of Pink Purslane *Claytonia sibirica* (some with white flowers) and Herb Robert *Geranium robertianum*.



DIPPERS bobbing on stones

We reached the railway's double bridge spanning the river where Chaffinches were bathing. Then on to the footbridge over which we walked to explore the path on the West bank, an area I had never before explored. We were rewarded at the end of

that path, by the sight of a family of Dippers bobbing on stones in the river on the other bank. We stood for quite a long time watching them before retracing our steps back to the footbridge.

There we spotted a patch of Dove's-foot Cranesbill *Geranium molle*. Later we were able to compare that with Hedgerow Cranesbill *Geranium pyrenaicum*, which has larger pink-purple flowers with well-notched petals. As for the trees, Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* was laden with blossom and we found a Hornbeam *Carpinus betulus* with its unusual, thus easily recognisable, seed-pod wings hanging in wee cascades.

The vegetation was lush all around, but everywhere we saw the invasive little seedlings of Himalayan Balsam *Impatiens glandulifera* filling every gap, the plants not yet in flower, but promising to take a stranglehold. We saw too the plentiful remains of that other invasive plant, Few-flowered Leek *Allium paradoxum*, now going over. We were appalled to see one whole field covered with the thick growth of yet another menace, Giant Hogweed *Heracleum mantegazzianum*, seemingly unrestrained and untreated, thus allowing its wide spread. On the way back, we saw three species of Butterflies - Orange Tip, Green-veined White and Peacock - coming out to soak up the sun.

We stopped at the weir again as we returned. There we examined the little blackish corpse of a wee creature which Neville identified as a Water Shrew, about two and a half inches long, with a little protruding snout. We watched more Dippers and Wagtails and several Lesser Black-backed Gulls in the water, with a few Mallards.

Then it was back to our cars before cups of refreshing tea and a little bit of shopping at the local Tesco: another invasive phenomenon! Thank you to everyone on this excursion for walking at my slow speed to keep me company!

Mary Tebble

Postscript. Jackie recorded over 170 species of plants on this walk. Obviously, I have not mentioned them all but their abundance is indicative of the varied vegetation and interest of this near-to-town riverside area.

CRAIGLOCKHART POND

| | |
|---------------|---------------|
| <u>Date</u> | 28th May |
| <u>Leader</u> | Molly Woolgar |

After a very wet, cold and breezy day, the weather improved for our evening outing, and although threatening clouds still hung around, it remained dry and muggy. Ten people turned up for our walk round Craiglockhart Pond, led by Molly. Unfortunately, birds were rather conspicuous by their absence, but the

pond did produce some interest: one pair of Mute Swans with a family of seven cygnets; and one pair of Coots with three chicks and one pair with two, which still had their red head markings - always confusing, as when they get older they lose the red and just become black and white like their parents, unlike the adult Moorhens which do have red on the head.

The mother Swan kept harassing a family of Mallards with five babies whenever they encroached near her brood. There were also some Tufted Ducks and the odd Gull on the water. Betty Smith came armed with all her usual pond dipping gear and she did her perilous balancing acts round the edge, to collect some of the interesting 'gunge' from the murky waters. 'Nothing venture, nothing have' is obviously her motto!

The midges were certainly around, but not too persistent! There was an energetic group of ladies doing their exercising in the large glass-fronted sports centre, which overlooks the pond. I, for one, was not envious of their vigour; far better to be out and about walking in the fresh air.

There were lots of lovely scented Hawthorns in full blossom, some with colourful maroon centres to the flowers. We did see a Dunnock, a Magpie and a Robin. Plants included the grass Wood Millet *Millium effusum*.

By 8pm, Molly decided we had seen everything that was around, so we headed for home to check what Bill Oddie was doing on his TV *Springwatch* programme.

Helen Slater

LOCH ARDINNING

Date 31st May
Leader Joanie McNaughton



We were blessed with glorious weather this last day of May; one of the few good days this year. It was sunny, with only a few fluffy clouds, warm, no wind, and everything was singing, flying and flowering beautifully. The ornithologists were happy, the lepidopterists were delighted and the botanists were pretty much delighted too.

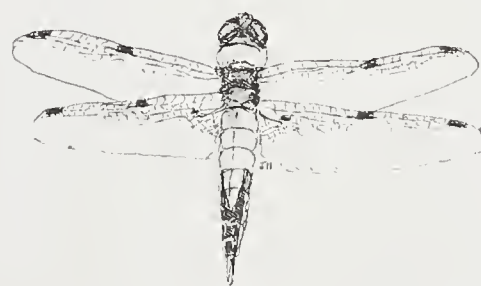
Loch Ardinning is another of what I call 'wee gems', given its proximity to Glasgow and the fact that the land has not been managed intensively. It was gifted to the Scottish Wildlife Trust in 1988. The surrounding landscape was formed 11,000 years ago at the end of the last Ice Age where a massive glacier had carved out the landscape leaving behind hollows which collected melt-water and created the loch. As the ice retreated, nature was able to colonise the land slowly and form the varied vegetation found today. The main south-eastern part of the loch is one such glacially-formed kettle-hole and fine examples of conglomerates

can also be found. A dam was built across the outflow of the loch in the early 19th century, thus raising the water level and creating the long, narrow north-western arm to the loch.

The SWT reserve encompasses loch, woodland and open heather moor, including Muirhouse Muir, all of which make the area a delight to the eye and fascinating to the naturalist. The views to the north are stunning; over Strathblane and the River Endrick north-eastwards to Ben Lomond and north-west to the Arrochar Hills, including Ben Narnain, Ben Vane and Ben Vorlich.

The south-eastern part of the loch is densely populated with reeds, rushes and sedges, and it is rich in invertebrate life, including the uncommon Azure Damselfly. It is a haven for wintering and breeding wildfowl, notably Tufted Duck. Water Lobelia is a local speciality. The carr area to the south-west of the loch holds mature Willows, Birch and Alder, with a variety of wildflowers including three species of Orchid, and is attractive to Butterflies. Muirhouse Muir vegetation includes local patches of Cranberry, Bog Myrtle and Bog Asphodel and supports a variety of resident birds, including both Red and Black Grouse, although we did not manage to claim a tick for either of these. However, when we were there the 'local patches' of Cranberry were spectacular and would be better described as 'carpets', with a mass of pink flowers.

The outflow stream from the loch had many Damselflies; the Blue-tailed *Ischnura elegans* was slightly more common than either the Large Red *Pyrrosoma nymphula* or the Common Blue *Enallagma cyathigera*, but several of these were 'in cop'. A freshly emerged Four-spotted Chaser *Libellula quadrimaculata*, hung up in nettles, captivating us all for several minutes. As so often happens, within ten minutes, as we came to the open loch, there were scores of these same Chasers hawking through the Bottle Sedge *Carex rostrata* and Reedmace *Typha latifolia*, some of them paired already and seeking egg-laying opportunities. They, together with dozens of Alder flies *Sialis lutaria* and many more Damsels were alighting on all the fen plants which included Bog Bean *Menyanthes trifoliata*, Marsh Cinquefoil *Potentilla palustris* and Common Spike-rush *Eleocharis palustris*.



A freshly emerged FOUR-SPOTTED CHASER
LIBELLULA QUADRIMACULATA, hung up in nettles

In the warm sunshine Orange Tip and Peacock Butterflies fluttered around in the glades. Small Heaths were numerous on the hill grasslands; the bracken contained several Brown Silver-line moths. Jean Long's bounding pursuit of aerial insects eventually resulted in the find of the day: a moth named Mother Shipton which had to be determined by the expert Roy Leverton, because it was photographed from below.

The good weather gave us marvellous sightings of birds. It's always nice to see the so-called common ones: Robin, Wren, Chaffinch, Blackbird, Blue Tit, Coal Tit and Treecreeper. And nice too to see and hear some of the summer warblers: Chiffchaff, Willow Warbler, Blackcap and Sedge Warbler. I was disappointed not to see, but delighted to listen to, a Grasshopper Warbler with its endless reeling, like a fishing line being spun out over water. We saw and heard Reed Bunting all around, and it was lovely to see a pair of Lesser Redpoll, clearly breeding in the area. We were delighted to see Stonechat and Whinchat and to hear the latter singing too - another tick for the breeding list; and we saw a single Tree Pipit displaying. The list continued, with Meadow Pipit, Carrion Crow, Jackdaw, Starling, Heron, Mallard, Coot, Moorhen, Peewit, Tufted Duck, Greylag and Mute Swan. And of the birds of prey we saw Buzzard, a fleeting glimpse of a Sparrowhawk as it sped across the dam, and Kestrel.

The day culminated with a much appreciated cup of tea and scones, courtesy of my sister who lives nearby. Fortunately we all arrived, but some later than others, thanks to my duff map. Neville and his car load spent half an hour looking for Balmore Primary School which I had written on the map instead of Baldernock Primary School!

Joanie McNaughton
Neville Crowther (Insects)



LOCH ARDINNING (THE PLANTS)

This was a lovely place to be on a perfect summer's day, and while a lot of attention was devoted to an amazing - I was going to say 'hatch' but I should say 'emergence' of Dragonflies, the plants were not to be despised.

CRANBERRY
Vaccinium oxycoccos



During the first part of the day we were walking close to the loch, and repeated diversions to the water's edge revealed not just Dragonflies (and a few midges) but a wide variety of water plants. Marsh Marigold *Caltha palustris* and Bogbean *Menyanthes trifoliata* provided patches of colour; Common Spike-rush *Eleocharis palustris*, and Bottle Sedge *Carex rostrata* were also in flower and many of the spikes of Water Horsetail *Equisetum fluviatile* carried spore-bearing cones. Valerian *Valeriana officinalis*, Water Plantain *Alisma plantago-aquatica*, and Water Forget-me-not *Myosotis scorpioides* had still to come out. Close to the water's edge the round leaves of Marsh Pennywort *Hydrocotyle vulgaris* were plentiful while, in one inlet, the underwater rosettes of Water Lobelia *Lobelia dortmanna* were just beginning to put up flower spikes. This plant, a rarity of the area, can be identified from a cross-section of the leaves which have two lengthwise compartments.

Above the loch was damp heather moor, white with the seed heads of Hare's-tail Cottongrass *Eriophorum vaginatum*. There were patches of Bog Myrtle *Myrica gale* and Deergrass *Trichophorum cespitosum* and tussocks of Purple Moorgrass *Molinia caerulea*. The beautiful Wavy Hairgrass *Deschampsia flexuosa* was just coming into flower while Tormentil *Potentilla erecta* and Heath Milkwort *Polygala serpyllifolia* provided colour. Jean Long spent a lot of time scouring the area, determined to find Cranberry *Vaccinium oxycoccos*, but it wasn't until after lunch when we came to a wetter area that she was finally successful. Here were the patches of Sphagnum Moss which the tiny evergreen shrub likes to crawl over, and here it was flowering abundantly, a swathe of tiny pink flowers.

Some of the party diverted to examine the fine-grained conglomerate rocks which used to be quarried and crushed for sand and attractive small pebbles. We had been invited for tea with Joanie's sister and husband, and I was intrigued to see very similar pebbles on their main drive. They showed us round their beautiful garden, complete with pond and trout stream, and pointed out the Wren's nests which prevented them from using either their front door or the garden hose. There are disadvantages to living with wildlife! But tea in the garden made a perfect end to the day.

Jackie Muscott



Lunch time, Inchcailloch



Malham



After lunch, Tynningham



Examining Angular Solomon's Seal, Yorkshire



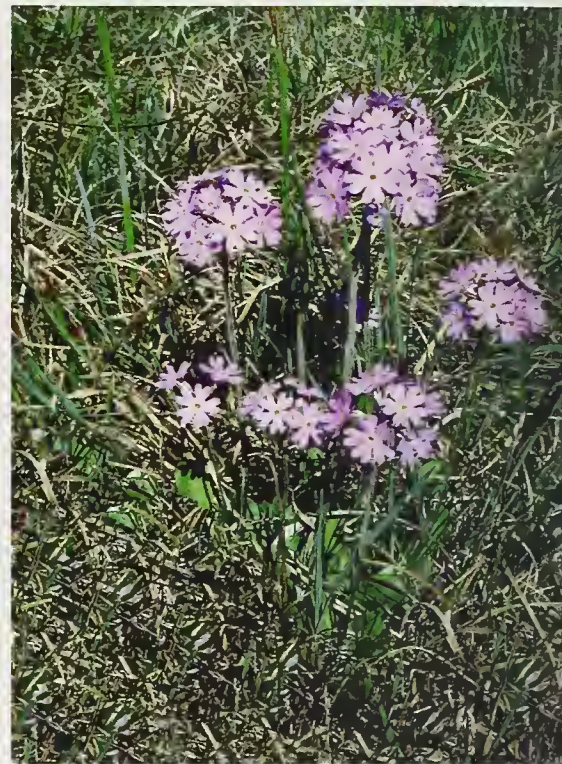
Meeting at Almondell



Angular Solomon's Seal



Malham Cove



Primula farinosa, Yorkshire



Fairy Castle



Water Avens, Yorkshire



Little Owl, Yorkshire



Caerlaverock



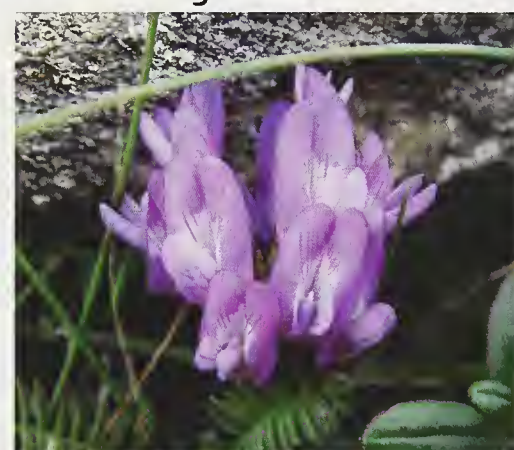
Whooper Swan with transmitter



Wigeon drake



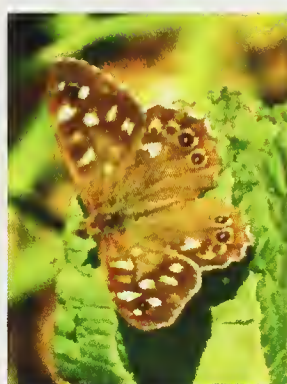
Scarlet Elf Cup, Caerlaverock



Astragalus danicus, Tulach Hill



Porcelain Fungus



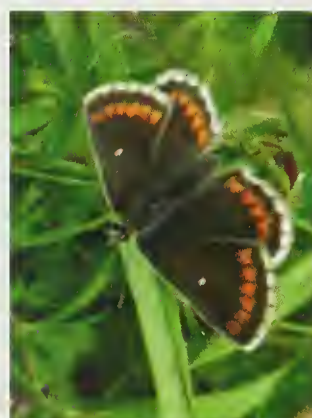
Speckled Wood



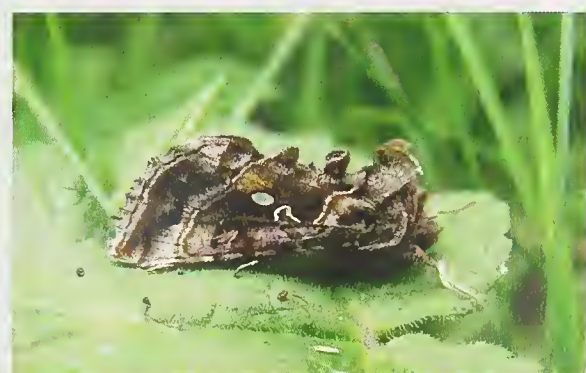
Lords and Ladies fructing spike



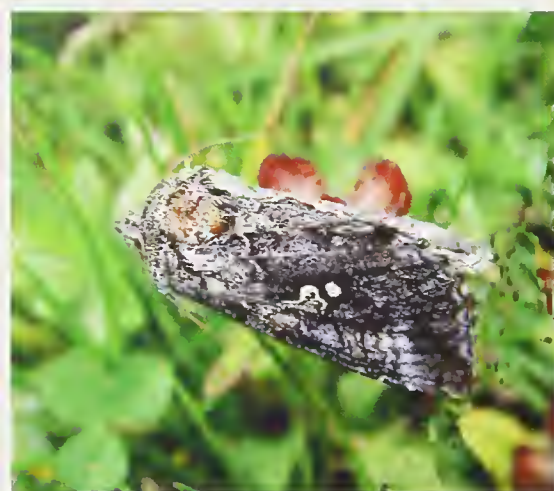
Purple Toothwort, R. Esk at Musselburgh



Northern Brown Argus



Beautiful Golden Y, Tulach Hill



Scarce Silver Y, Dunkeld



Bee Orchid, Farnham



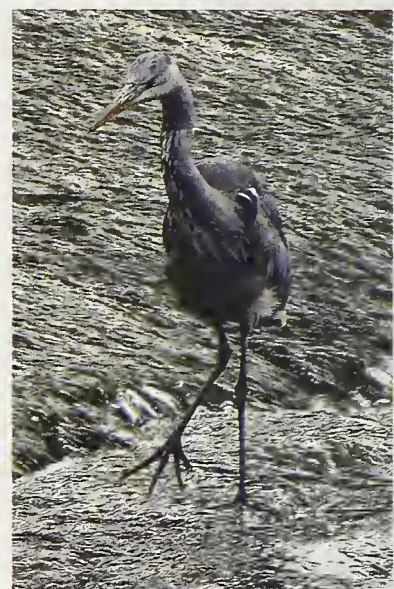
Brown Silver-line



Puffins, Firth of Forth



Song Thrush



Heron on R. Esk



Tree Mallow, on Craigleith Island



Greater Tussock Sedge, Vogrie



Phaeolepiota aurea



Hydnum rufescens



Strobilomyces strobilacens



Paxillus obscurus



Cortinarius cinnabarinus

HOLYROOD PARK

Date

4th June

Leader

Natalie Taylor



Holyrood Park is both renowned and protected because of the rare plants which occur there and it was with the aim of seeing some of these that we visited the Park. We started our walk near St Margaret's Loch, following the now well established burn up into Hunter's Bog. The 'Muir Burn', as it is sometimes called, follows the line of the old culvert that was built in Victorian times to drain the pond in Hunter's Bog and help create St Margaret's Loch. During winter 2002/03 the burn was created as an alternative to replacing the age-damaged pipework of the culvert. This has added a new dimension to the Park's habitats, as it is one of only a few burns found in the Park.

Hunter's Bog is perhaps best known for its colony of Adder's-tongue Fern *Ophioglossum vulgatum*, a rare plant this far north and one that has been greatly studied in the Park over recent years. Despite the population of over 100,000 plants, it is remarkably easy to miss, and we took a wee while to find our first plant; however once you've got your eye in it is easy to find others, and so we did! Adder's-tongue Fern is named for the (alleged) resemblance of the spike to the tongue of an Adder, and consists of just the spike and one large, fleshy leaf. While looking for the Fern we were able to admire a number of Orchids, mainly Northern Marsh *Dactylorhiza purpurella*, but with a few late Common Spotted *D. fuchsii* thrown in for good measure.

The drainage of Hunter's Bog continued from the 1850s through to 1996, when the drain was blocked, the bog allowed to re-flood and the pond re-establish. Over the decade since this change in management a huge change has been seen in the vegetation surrounding the pond. The recreation of the 'wet-meadow' habitat is also thought to have been highly beneficial to the Adder's-tongue Fern and perhaps responsible for the large population now present.

As we continued through Hunter's Bog towards the Hawes, we saw one of the two families of Stonechat that breed in the bog area. Stonechats seem to be on a firm footing in the Park and over-winter in small numbers. At Raven's Rock we saw a few of the Fulmars that nest in the Park. Although most nest on the northern end of Salisbury Crags half a dozen or so pairs seem to prefer the more select location of Raven's Rock. Passing through the Hawes we followed the High Road round towards Dunsapie Loch.

There are a number of sheltered areas along the crag face of the High Road, many of which are favoured by Common Rock-rose *Helianthemum nummularium*. This plant is protected and managed in Holyrood Park not just for its own sake, but also as it is the food plant for the Northern Brown Argus Butterfly.

This Butterfly became extinct in the Park in 1869 as a result of over collecting and habitat loss, however it reappeared (whether by nature or with a helping hand) in 2004 and for a couple of years appeared to be going from strength to strength. Unfortunately the terribly wet summers that we've had over the last couple of years seem to have had a very detrimental effect on the vulnerable population, with only a handful of records for 2007 and 2008. On our visit although the weather was in our favour the Butterflies were not, and we didn't manage to record this lovely little Butterfly.

Largely due to our leader's tendency to tell long, rambling stories at every available opportunity, our time was fast running out and we were unable to climb Dunsapie Crag to look for the Purple Milk Vetch *Astragalus danicus* which is found there, as well as on Salisbury Crags and in a few locations near the summit of Arthur's Seat. My apologies to everyone who wanted to see this plant – maybe next time! We did however get some nice views of the Mute Swan family that make their home on Dunsapie Loch and nest on the specially constructed and maintained island on the Loch. Continuing down the High Road back towards St Margaret's Loch took us through one of the few areas of established woodland in the Park. This is an excellent place for enjoying some of the Park's small birds, including the seasonal Warblers, and is a great place for practising bird song identification early in the season.

All too soon we were back at St Margaret's Loch and another outing was over.

Natalie Taylor

UNION CANAL TO THE CITY BYPASS

Date

18th June

Leader

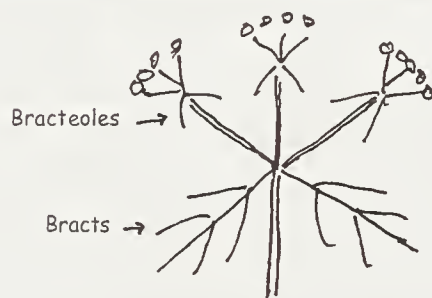
Margaret Perry

The stretch of the Union Canal covered by the evening's outing was new territory for most of the group. On its course westwards from Kingsknowe Station it passes through the Wester Hailes housing estate, where it has had a chequered history. In the 1960s when the estate was built the canal here was filled in for about one and a half miles, the water being culverted in underground pipes. Then, as part of the Millennium Link project connecting the Edinburgh/Glasgow canal system, the Wester Hailes section was recut, extra bridges were built and this waterway reopened in 2000. To mark the occasion several wooden sculptures by Robert Coia were placed along the verge: a frog at Bridge 6B, a dragon at Bridge 6C, swans and otters at the western end and two lifesize workmen at the eastern end of the new canal. These sculptures have weathered well in the intervening years. As part of the canal restoration scheme, varieties of shrubs and trees were planted and the banks seeded with wild plants.

In the overcast and windy weather, we walked briskly along the tarmacked pathway on the north bank, where the grass verge had unfortunately been recently mown. The south bank on the other hand was lush with vegetation. Amongst the plants were Wild Carrot *Daucus carota*, Yarrow *Achillea millefolium*, Cut-leaved Cranesbill *Geranium dissectum*, White Campion *Silene latifolia* and, especially on the south bank, Salad Burnet *Sanguisorba minor*. Yellow Irises *Iris pseudacorus* were in flower in the canal, and Reed Sweet Grass *Glyceria maxima* lined the edges. Families of Swans and Mallards had settled in, also several Moorhens.



WILD CARROT *Daucus carota* on the banks of the Union Canal



STRUCTURE of CARROT FLOWERHEAD

About one mile further on, beside the playing field, there was a mass of Yellow Rattle *Rhinanthus minor*, Bird's-foot Trefoil *Lotus corniculatus*, some Valerian *Valeriana officinalis* and Hedgerow Cranesbill *Geranium pyrenaicum*. A number of yellow cocoons of the Six-spot Burnet Moth attached to tall stems of grass were the sole representatives of the Insecta on this evening. The find of the day, near a wooded area on the banks of the original part of the canal, was several tall plants, about 5 feet high, with creamy spikes of flowers, later identified by Jackie as Caucasian Beet *Beta trigyna*. Another curiosity was the growth of Pocket Sloes, caused by the fungus *Tophrina pruni*, on a Blackthorn bush. A colourful array of Crosswort *Cruciata laevipes*, Lesser Stitchwort *Stellaria graminea*, Field Speedwell *Veronica persica* and Field Forget-me-not *Myosotis arvensis* bordered the path near the Scott Russell

aqueduct which had been built over the city bypass in 1988. On return to base we were all pleased to have discovered yet another wildlife haven in the midst of suburbia.

Margaret Perry

INCHCAILLOCH, LOCH LOMOND

Date 21st June
Leader Ian C McCallum



On the 21st of June - the longest day - there was an outing to Inchcailloch attended by both Edinburgh and Glasgow Natural History Societies. Nineteen members came from Edinburgh and seven from Glasgow. McFarlane's ferry left Balmaha jetty just after 10.30. When we arrived on the Island we saw a male Goosander and a female Red-breasted Merganser. We were met on Inchcailloch by the Loch Lomond Park Ranger, Sandra Hutchison, who is also a member of the Glasgow Nats. She gave a short talk about the Island and then we were climbing up the path - rebuilt since the last time we had visited - to the Central Valley. At the path junction the fitter ones headed off to climb to the summit, Tom Na Nigheanan, while the others continued through the Central Valley to Port Bawn. The climbers passed through the Alder tree marsh where Tree Pipit was seen and heard. This is one of the best locations for birds, however as we were later than our previous visits the following birds were heard but not seen: - Redstart, Redpoll, Wood Warbler, Blackcap, Garden Warbler and Sandpiper.

It was explained that Inchcailloch meant the *Isle of the cowled women* (nuns) which referred to the establishment of a nunnery on the Island by St Kentigerna. At that time it had been a farming community growing oats and barley. The flora and fauna were very different then and included Black Grouse and Brown Hare, but few woodland species such as Great Spotted Woodpecker. In 1796 the tenant farmer was told to plant acorns and Alder cones and from that time a system of woodland management evolved involving the coppicing of Oak and Alder. The Oak bark was used for tanning leather and the stripped timber used to make vinegar, wood tar and dyestuffs at a factory in Balmaha. The Alder was used for wooden clogs and for gunpowder. No one has lived on the Island for the last 200 years.

The next stop on the walk was at the conglomerate exposure, where we discussed the Highland Boundary Fault, which runs through the Island. The conglomerate is a 'hard' rock and forms the high ridge of the fault, which also forms Conic Hill. On the west side of the Island the conglomerate is replaced by an outcrop of serpentine rock, which is softer, but base-rich, and which gives more diverse vegetation. The serpentine rock was used as a fertilizer as there was no local limestone available.

At the Viewpoint we had an excellent panorama of the hills to the south, including an island called The Kitchen, which is thought to have been used as a crannog about 2000 years ago. We had a 10-minute break at the Summit for tea and to admire the views to the north of the Loch and the surrounding hills. The sun shone and the cameras clicked. On the descent, an area at the side of the path was pointed out where there were tracks and signs of Fallow Deer as well as numerous Dor Beetles *Geotrupes stercorarius*. Farther down the trail the party were shown a corn-drying kiln, which had been used when the Island was farmed.

At Port Bawn we met up with the rest of the party and lunch was enjoyed in the sunshine. The Ranger, Sandra, who is based there, was very helpful and arranged for the toilets to be open.

After lunch we continued along the west side of the Island, where we moved into the base rich area of the serpentine rock and saw Woodruff *Galium odoratum*, and Maidenhair Spleenwort *Asplenium trichomanes*, among other species. As we progressed along the path we crossed depressions, which were the remnants of the early ridge and furrow cultivation system.

Our next stop was at the ruined farmhouse, which had been used to stable horses at the time of the 1914/18 war. The horses were used to haul timber for the mainland. It was noted that timber was extracted from the Island in the 15th Century to build ships for a punitive expedition against the Lord of the Isles. We arrived at the burial ground where the leader was delighted to find a stone erected to an earlier McCallum. The burial ground contains the ruins of the 13th Century church dedicated to St Kentigerna. The grass cutting in this area has probably removed many wild flowers, and there are 25 Fallow Deer on the island which are partial to the wild flowers – especially the Enchanter's Nightshade *Circaea lutetiana* from which the flowers had been cropped. Sandra thought some form of control of the Deer would be necessary. Although we did not see as many flowers as on our previous visit we did note the usual Climbing Corydalis *Ceratocarpus claviculata*, Beech Fern *Phegopteris connectilis*, Remote Sedge *Carex remota*, etc.

Although there were not many bird sightings, there were plenty of Chaffinches and a Treecreeper that performed well. The highlight of the bird sightings was just before and as we were disembarking from the ferry when four Ospreys were seen – one carrying a large fish!



TREECREEPER

On the track leading up to the Visitor Centre there was a fine specimen of the fungus, Chicken of the Woods *Laetiporus sulphureus* growing on an old Oak tree. I seem to remember on one of the early excursions, that Society members helped themselves to the chicken for their evening meal.

At the Visitor Centre Sandra had organised tea and coffee for the members – and she was duly thanked for her superb organisation in making the day so enjoyable. The final stroke of luck took place when the Edinburgh Coach was ready to leave - the weather broke and the rain poured down – what timing!

Ian C McCallum

WEST LINTON

| | |
|---------------|--------------|
| <u>Date</u> | 25th June |
| <u>Leader</u> | Janet Watson |

After a dull, wet day we were fortunate in having a lovely evening. West Linton is an interesting village and as we made our way towards the A702 we were intrigued by the way the path wound its way between the old houses. A plaque on one house shows where George Johnston, the founder of the Arrol Motor Company had stayed, and we noticed another house which had been most attractively converted from a church.

After crossing the A702 we made our way up an unmade lane. At first the banks were covered in swathes of Pink Purslane *Claytonia sibirica* (mostly white) and soon there was a variety of wild flowers and garden escapes. We noticed that some of the Cow Parsley *Anthriscus sylvestris* was still in flower. There were a few Common Spotted Orchids *Dactylorhiza fuchsii* – also Fringe Cups *Tellima grandiflora* and Bistort *Persicaria bistorta*.

We were surprised to see how many houses, old and new, bordered the lane, and on stopping to look at one we were lucky enough to get good views of a Spotted Flycatcher, first on a wall and then on a bush above it. Farther on Swallows were flying low over the fields.

We came to a division of the ways and turned back towards the village. Here in places there were ferns beside the lane – Lady Fern *Athyrium filix-femina*, Male Fern *Dryopteris filix-mas* and Broad Buckler Fern *D. delatata*. Later, on the way through the wood, there was Hard Shield Fern *Polystichum aculeatum*.

We made a short diversion down to the bridge over the River Lyne hoping to see Grey Wagtails. Not only did we see Grey Wagtail but also another Spotted Flycatcher. The view was very attractive looking down on the river, and an old house on the riverbank completed the picture.

Soon we turned off onto a footpath through the woods. Here there was lots of Sanicle *Sanicula europaea*. We had been told we would see a most impressive fungus and sure enough no one could help but see an old tree trunk covered with Dryad's Saddle *Polyporus squamosus* in very good condition. As if this was not enough a side branch several feet long was lying in the field beside it, and it too was covered by the fungus.

Although Dryad's Saddle is quite a common fungus this was quite spectacular. One sharp-eyed member spotted a much less obvious fungus, a *Pluteus* – probably *Pluteus cervinus* – while the rest of us noticed nothing but the Dryad's Saddle.

By way of a steep slope – fortunately with steps put there by the Woodland Trust – we returned to the village, after a most successful outing.

Betty Mitchelhill

BORESTANE VIA HENSHAW BURN

Date 28th June
Leader Michael Jones

At the top of a valley an Edinburgh lawyer built a house about 1750 which no longer exist.

So wrote Robert Cochrane in his book *Pentland Walks* in the 1930s. The house was called Thomson's Folly and stood a few hundred yards from the Borestane, near the path from North Esk Reservoir to Listonshiels. Not a stone is now visible, only a few hummocks in a patch of grass which could easily be covered by a large carpet.

The folly of an Edinburgh lawyer proved a blessing to the small group of naturalists who stumbled upon the site of the house some 258 years later. Michael Jones had led the group from his cottage at North Esk Reservoir to the Henshaw Burn, and then to a wind-blasted copse near the watershed, where there was enough shelter in the lee of a dyke to take lunch. On the way Michael had shown us the Oak Fern *Gymnocarpium dryopteris* and Stag's-horn Clubmoss *Lycopodium clavatum* which survive beside the Henshaw, then produced Lesser Twayblade Orchids *Listera cordata* from under deep heather.



The copse itself had been this year's home to a family of Long-eared Owls, but none appeared from their roosts among the Scots Pine and the lichen-covered Canadian Black Spruce. We came upon Thomson's Folly when walking west from the copse after lunch. At first sight there was nothing of natural history interest; a few flowers perhaps, some Pill Sedge *Carex pilulifera*, but no more. However, the small points of yellow that had looked like Lady's Bedstraw *Galium verum* turned out to be the ripening spores of Moonwort *Botrychium lunaria*. After I had confidently stated that this was a one-off, we found seven more minute plants. Meanwhile Neville had drawn attention to a drowsy Bumble Bee on a small flower. The bee was the rare *Bombus monticola*, its common name being Blaeberry (or Mountain) Bumble Bee. Neville had found this on nearby Patie's Hill in the past. On this occasion there were only two individuals as well as one or two more common bees.

By now our attention was fixed on this patch, and we found Lesser Clubmoss *Selaginella selaginoides* before we set off for the Borestane.

The path to the Borestane had been used by a fox before we arrived. The stone is an outcrop of ancient sandstone, smoothed and sculpted by wind and rain, and more recently engraved with the initials of walkers. Some Larch trees give meagre shelter on this northern boundary of Peebles-shire and this is a source of the North Esk. From the stone our party briefly enjoyed the northerly view over the Lothians before following the valley back to the reservoir.

On a previous visit to North Esk I had wondered at the odd patches of cultivation high on the hillsides. Michael explained that these were to provide feeding and shelter for Red-legged Partridges. The local estate had introduced these to provide some shooting for Bungalow Bill and his Chelsea Tractor chums now that the Grouse are so scarce. The few birds that survive the annual massacre manage to out-compete the native Grey Partridges. We saw no Grouse or Partridges.

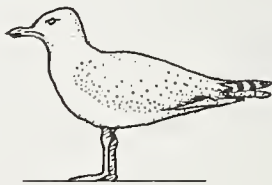
Some 1,600 pairs of Black-headed Gulls nest at North Esk Reservoir, using 2 small islands to escape from predators. The area around the reservoir is base-rich and the plants and insects are correspondingly diverse. Chris found a Dor Beetle, and Neville showed us the mites that cling to its iridescent underside, disembarking to feed and hopping back on when the beetle moves off. Earlier in the day we had seen a solitary Whinchat nearby, an example of a common summer migrant that has all but vanished.

The day had been blustery and the morning had been quite damp. We had been nibbled by midges, and wading through a burn at the end of the walk had made no difference to my already sodden feet. We had been on the hill some six hours and the experience had been a joy throughout, despite the physical discomforts. The outdoor academy had covered almost all aspects: land use, lichens (such as *Ophioparma ventosa*), rare ferns and raptors. Altogether this was a most memorable experience.

David Adamson

PUFFIN CRUISE TO THE FORTH ISLANDS

Date 2nd July



The *Maid of the Forth* was again full to capacity including sixteen Nats. It was staffed by the RSPB and accompanied by an informative commentary in which ecological awareness was a prominent element, as well as being a soft recruitment drive.

As we approached Inchgarvie, on which one major support for the rail bridge rests, our attention was drawn to the scores of sea birds nesting there: the three largest species of gull, Herring, Greater and Lesser Black-backed; Fulmar Petrel on the north side cliffs;

Eiders already with broods of ducklings; one or two Shags. Listeners gradually adjusted to the commentary directions when 'lefts' and 'rights' and 'pointed end' and 'blunt end' were our reference points, although they were not always consistently followed.

On many of the islets such as Haystacks and Car Craig there were two or three dozen nesting Cormorants occupying the high ground with a scattering of gull species. Both our native Seals were seen in the early part of the trip. They were mostly Grey or Atlantic Seals sprawled on buoys and rocky skerries throughout the voyage, plus one or two Common Seals, inappropriately named, at least locally. We were constantly entertained by the acrobatic feeding dives of Common Terns as we sailed along. Although it is possible to see all five marine Terns in the Forth we only saw this one species. However there was speculation about several very dark 'smoky' Terns seen late in the trip which may have been Black Terns.



BLACK TERN

Passing Inchcolm with its famous Abbey, which was built by David I, we were told of how his brother Alexander I became indebted to a hermit for shelter and food when marooned by a storm on the island. The promised reward was fulfilled by David after his brother's untimely death.

Now in the open Forth, we were able to enjoy groups of Auks of all three species, Puffin, Guillemot and Razorbill feeding and flying to nest sites on the larger islands. Some of the Guillemots already had chicks on the water with the adults. Approaching Inchkeith, the largest island, the numbers of Auks increased. We were disappointed not to hear the calls of Peregrines, which had nested on the island, as usual raising four chicks. One black blob at the top of the radio mast was assumed to be one of them. Many Cormorants were on nests at the south end; and Puffins popped out of burrows on the top of the island, swirled around in the melee of many other bird species and bobbed around in groups on the water.

On the return journey there were a few notable sightings. A 'dark phase' Arctic Skua was seen for a few seconds as it flew ahead of us, and Tom Delaney picked up a flock of about thirty Scoters lying on the sea near to Leith Docks. At Inchmickery, an RSPB reserve, Fulmars, Common Terns, Shags and Puffins were prominent along with ubiquitous gulls.

Passing the discharging tankers once more, we soon reached the jetty at Hawes Inn. Thanks go to Grace for once again organising the trip.

Neville Crowther



TULACH HILL

Date

5th July

Leaders

Jackie Muscott and Mary Clarkson

A small group of about a dozen met at Blair Atholl for the 'alpine' excursion to Tulach Hill in early July. We were lucky with the weather again - a very pleasant day, comfortable for walking and no rain until we were well south of Perth on the way home.

The first hazard of the day was following the track across the A9, but we managed it without accident, and were soon over the stile leading into an open birchwood on the north side of the hill. The wood must have been full of Anemones *Anemone nemorosa* in the spring; now Pignut *Conopodium majus* was plentiful, along with the Chimney Sweeper Moth *Odezia atrata* whose caterpillars feed on it. Birds were not much in evidence, but two green moths provided plenty of excitement; first a pair of Large Emeralds *Geometra papilionaria* and then a Light Emerald *Campaea margaritata*.

A stream ran beside the wooded area and here we found Pale Sedge *Carex pallescens*, and higher up, near a stand of Juniper *Juniperus communis*, beautiful patches of both Oak Fern *Gymnocarpium dryopteris* and Beech Fern *Pliegopteris connectilis*.

Presently we emerged into a splendid calcareous flush dominated by the rarest of the Cottongrasses, the Broad-leaved *Eriophorum latifolium*. This area detained us for some time, and we lunched there, admiring the splendid views down to Blair Atholl and to the hills beyond. Lime-loving plants included the Fragrant Orchid *Gymnadenia conopsea*, the Early Marsh Orchid *Dactylorhiza incarnata*, Yellow Saxifrage *Saxifraga aizoides*, Northern Bedstraw *Galium boreale*, Scottish Asphodel *Tofieldia pusilla*, Lesser Clubmoss *Selaginella selaginoides*, Quaking Grass *Briza media*, Meadow Oat-grass *Helictotrichon pratense* and the dainty little Hair Sedge *Carex capillaris*.

Out on the open hillside more acid conditions, interspersed with basic flushes and patches of calcareous grassland, led to some very strange bedfellows, with lime-loving plants like *Selaginella* and acid-loving plants like Round-leaved Sundew *Drosera rotundifolia* growing side by side. One of our less common Butterflies, the Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary *Boloria selene*, was on the wing, its larval food plants, *Viola spp.* being in good supply; and the even rarer Northern Brown Argus *Aricia artaxerxes* was found near Rock-rose *Helianthemum nummularium* upon which its larvae feed. Caterpillars of the Northern Eggar Moth *Lasiocampa quercus f. callunae* and the Dark Tussock Moth *Dicallomera fascelina* were discovered in the heather, and a fine specimen of a Golden-ringed Dragonfly *Cordulegaster boltonii* was seen resting in a boggy area.

We were in search of a limestone outcrop near the top of the hill and Roger Holme soon found it for us. Here was more Rock-rose, Kidney Vetch *Anthyllis vulneraria*, Mountain Pansy *Viola lutea* and Purple Milk-vetch *Astragalus danicus*, with Brittle Bladder Fern *Cystopteris fragilis*, Green Spleenwort *Asplenium viride* and Dog's Mercury *Mercurialis perennis* in the grykes. At the summit we added Moonwort *Botrychium lunaria*, Mountain Everlasting *Antennaria dioica* and Lesser Twayblade *Listera cordata* to our plant list, with Bearberry *Arctostaphylos uva-ursi* nearby.

Mycologists in the party had to be satisfied with a few plant rusts, but Jean Murray was delighted to find the very dark Hooked Scorpion Moss *Scorpidium scorpioides* in one of the basic flushes, and other lime-loving mosses on the pavement.

People descended at various speeds and by slightly different routes, meeting again at the old mill for tea and home-made cakes. One party ended the day by finding a Beautiful Golden Y Moth *Autographa pulchrina*, while another group descended by a series of rich flushes where there were hundreds, if not thousands, of flowering spikes of Alpine Bistort *Persicaria vivipara*. This party came out by a stile a bit further along the road where Mary Clarkson had discovered a stand of Tor-grass *Brachypodium pinnatum* the previous year. It was still there, along with a spike of Northern Marsh Orchid *Dactylorhiza purpurella*. Either way, a good end to the day.

Jackie Muscott



BOG ASPHODEL
Narthecium Ossifragum

(ACID SOILS)

SCOTTISH ASPHODEL
Tofieldia pusilla

(CALCAREOUS SOILS)

We saw Bog Asphodel at Loch Ardingning in May and Greenlaw in July. The smaller Scottish Asphodel we saw in the limestone area of Tulach Hill, Blair Atholl in July.

COCKMUIR to TOXSIDE

Date 6th July
Leader Richard Buckland

No sun; no Butterflies; no Nats, except Neville as back-up. Just rain!

We'll try again same time next year.

Lyn Blades

GREENLAW KAIMS AND DOGDEN MOSS

Date 12th July
Leader Michael Braithwaite

A party of twelve met at Bedshiel by kind permission of Mr Andrew Elliot, in very cool conditions, to explore Greenlaw Kaims, Dogden Moss and the Fangrist Burn.

Our walk to the kaims took us over a rise in the ground with an abundance of Cross-leaved Heath *Erica tetralix* and Purple Moorgrass *Molinia caerulea*, a community usually reserved for hollows but indicative here of flushing by acid groundwater from higher ground to the west. Here the characters of Common Deergrass, now 'split' as *Trichophorum germanicum*, were noted. It forms good fruit and has a long oval leaf sheath opening. From the kaims we enjoyed a wide panorama with Dogden Moss to the south and the kaims snaking far to the east. Crossing the wet marginal 'rand' to the moss the first Cranberry *Vaccinium oxycoccos* was found, with White Sedge *Carex canescens* (aka *curta*) nearby. On the moss, Round-leaved Sundew *Drosera rotundifolia* was plentiful alongside an abundance of Hybrid Deergrass *Trichophorum x foersteri*, not forming good fruit and with a shortly oval leaf sheath opening. Proliferous plants of the hybrid were occasional. On reaching an area with stunted scrub Birch *Betula pubescens* we found abundant Cranberry with much fruit and some flowers still open. Somewhat curiously the Cranberry fruits best on *Sphagnum* hummocks drawn upwards by the Birch. Large patches of Bog Asphodel *Narthecium ossifragum* were just coming into flower nearby.

Returning to the kaims for lunch and then proceeding east we found Mountain Pansy *Viola lutea* before descending to the Fangrist Burn where Lesser Water-parsnip *Berula erecta* grows in plenty at 195 metres, almost its altitude limit for Britain. Along the burnside we studied a colony of Flat Sedge *Blysmus compressus* on a low ledge with Meadow Fescue *Festuca pratensis*. On an abutment under a small bridge we were surprised to observe Hart's-tongue Fern *Phyllitis scolopendrium*. Near the burnside Bristle Club-rush *Isolepis setacea* was found by Paddy Braithwaite. It turned out, on looking up the records, that this was almost exactly where she had spotted it 21 years earlier. Turning up a rivulet to the east we met a base-rich flush with Early Marsh Orchid

Dactylorhiza incarnata, Grass of Parnassus *Parnassia palustris*, Butterwort *Pinguicula vulgaris*, Lesser Clubmoss *Selaginella selaginoides* and the Sedges *Carex hostiana* and *C. dioica*. Turning back towards Bedshiel we strayed into a fen area troublesomely wet after recent rains with much Marsh Cinquefoil *Potentilla palustris*.

Michael Braithwaite

And from another notebook:-

Two pairs of Kestrels hung in the wind over the rough pasture as we began our walk, whilst Swallows and House Martins hawked around the farm buildings in the cool breezy conditions. Staying close to the ground they were struggling to find insects. We, too, fared little better, expecting to see the scarce Large Heath and even some of the diurnal moorland moths such as the Eggar or Fox but we were disappointed. During the day we did glimpse a few waders on the bogs but they were not numerous: several Snipe were flushed; Curlew bubbled away in the distance; Peewits dived and rose over their territories; and we even surprised a Red Grouse chick barely able to fly. Smaller birds were hard to find, except Meadow Pipits, although a cock Reed Bunting and a Wheatear were seen, and as the sunlight struggled through the clouds in the late afternoon a few Skylarks rose in song.

It was surprising to find many traps set in the vicinity of the Fangrist Burn, mostly on log bridges. A few contained dead prey such as Starlings and a Stoat. Our conclusion was that they were intended to control Mink to protect what had been a site for Water Voles. It was sad to observe that their effects were so indiscriminate. Michael informs me that this practice is common on the Grouse moors of the Lammermuirs and the trap is intended for the smaller Mustelids. To see these traps on Greenlaw Moor SSSI seems unfortunate.

An unusual find was a mole which had pursued its burrowing towards the Fangrist Burn only to be forced above ground as the water table met the rain-swollen stream.

Notable additions to the Dogden Moss list were the fungi *Galerina paludosa* and *Omphalina ericetorum* both typically found on peat bogs.

Neville Crowther

GLENHOLM

Date 19th July
Leader Eric and Eileen Perry

Glenholm Wildlife Project, according to the literature, is partly financed by VisitScotland and the European Community Leader+ 2000-2006 Programmes.

The weather was disappointingly mixed, but that did not spoil our enjoyment. There are several waymarked walks.

The group set off on the Riverside walk, visiting the Millennium Wood, which has been created for younger visitors, with models of animals hidden among the trees. We continued along the Holm Water to the hide. The area beside Holm Water was mainly rough pasture with a pitch and putt course. The hide looked out onto Glenholm Pond, but there was no birdlife to be seen.

The group divided at the hide, with the more active ones continuing on to the fort walk. At the start we passed a marker for the Iron Age settlement before the ascent to Chester Rig fort for lunch. Various return routes were followed back to the Centre, where we were all treated to tea and cakes by Eric and Eileen.

Alison Ramsay

When we arrived at the hide - all 24 of us- it was decided to have lunch in the shelter of the hide as it was drizzling and a bit dreich. As more and more piled into the hide, those of us who suffer from claustrophobia PANICKED Let's make for the top of the hill, I thought. A small select group made our way up to the Iron Age Fort - Chester Rig, had a slightly damp lunch in the midst of the fort and speculated about life at that time.

The Glenholm Project - the nice people at the Glenholm Centre and tea room - have made the farm a welcoming place for visitors. As well as the Millennium Wood and pitch and putt in the valley, there are four way-marked trails, one of which goes from the fort onto Chester Rig Head at 448 metres. We followed this and the posts led along the top of the ridge for about 3 kilometres, giving wonderful views all round - to the Cheviots, Tinto, the Pentlands. It was a lovely walk and we identified lots of Sedges and some flowers and enjoyed being on top of the world. Glenholm Centre is well worth a return visit.

Sandra Stewart

DUNKELD CALLY LOCH

Date 26th July
Leader John Watson



Cally Loch lies near to Dunkeld, one and a half kilometres to the West of its much larger and much better known neighbour, the Loch of the Lowes.

The day was pleasantly warm as our party of 19 prepared to set off through the Atholl woods. The sun shone at brief intervals and the threatening rain never quite materialized. Meanwhile our Leader gave a few snippets of local history, including the little known but very interesting story of the Battle of Dunkeld, 1689.

A force of 3,000 fierce Highlanders fresh and confident after their recent victory at Killiecrankie marched on Dunkeld only to suffer defeat at the hands of a newly raised regiment of untried troops, The Cameronians.

The excursion took in three small Lochs, a calcareous bog, a stretch of heather moor and about 6 kilometres of *Wayside and Woodland*. This yielded a huge haul of species, with Jackie Muscott recording over 200 plants including a dozen Sedges.

Cally Loch seemed to have been recently cleared of *Rhododendron ponticum* but still had swathes of another (perhaps less pernicious) alien, Intermediate Bridewort *Spiraea x rosalba*. Also of interest were a Cut-leaved Beech *Fagus sylvatica*, Bulbous Rush *Juncus bulbosus*, Sticky Groundsel *Senecio viscosus*, White Water-lily *Nymphaea alba*, Marsh Lousewort *Pedicularis palustris*, a fine stand of Beech Fern *Phegopteris connectilis* and the Fungi, Tawny Grisette *Amanita fulva* and The Blusher *Amanita rubescens*. Later, at Rotmell Loch the group was delighted to find Water Lobelia *Lobelia dortmanna* and several Common Blue Damselflies *Enallagma cyathigera*.



The calcareous bog section held a good assemblage of species. The plants included Marsh Pennywort *Hydrocotyle vulgaris* - an unlikely member of the Carrot family, *Apiaceae*, as you may know; Bog Asphodel *Narthecium ossifragum*, Chickweed Wintergreen *Trientalis europaea*, Round-leaved Sundew *Drosera rotundifolia*, Marsh Speedwell *Veronica scutellata*, Common Cottongrass *Eriophorum angustifolium*, Common Butterwort *Pinguicula vulgaris*, Sneezewort *Achillea ptarmica* and Fen Bedstraw *Galium uliginosum*.

The Fauna included the Butterfly, Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary *Boloria selene*, the moths: Smoky Wainscot *Mythimna impura*, Common Carpet *Epirrhoe alternata*, Northern Spinach *Eulithis populata* and the micro-moth *Udea lutealis* (everywhere). To the great delight of all, a nearby heathery tract yielded up the Blaeberry Bumblebee *Bombus monticola* and the moth, Scarce Silver-Y *Syngrapha interrogationis*.

The waysides on the main track to Rotmell Loch and around Birkenburn and The Glack were full of interest. Among the plants found were Upland Enchanter's Nightshade *Circaea x intermedia*, Fairy Flax *Linum catharticum*, Trailing St. John's Wort *Hypericum humifusum*, Yellow Pimpernell *Lysimachia nemorum*,

Melancholy Thistle *Cirsium heterophyllum*, Common Twayblade *Listera ovata*, Knotted Pearlwort *Sagina nodosa*, Quaking Grass *Briza media*, Allseed *Radiola linoides*, Petty Whin *Genista anglica* and, surprisingly, Spindle Tree *Euonymus europaeus*. Also noteworthy were Hard Shield Fern *Polystichum aculeatum*, lots of Lesser Clubmoss *Selaginella selaginoides* and a good colony of Heath Cudweed *Gnaphalium sylvaticum*.

The wayside fauna also kept the party busy with camera and notebook. Along with lots of the more common Butterflies, it was good to see the Dark Green Fritillary *Argynnis aglaja*. Also found were the Antler Moth *Cerapteryx graminis* and the Gold Swift Moth *Hepialus hecta*.

Other insects included the Wood Ant (worker) *Formica rufa*, Sexton Beetle *Nicrophorus vespilloides*, Dor Beetle *Geotrupes stercorarius*, the (large) Caterpillar of the Northern (or Oak) Eggar Moth *Lasiocampa quercus f. callunae*, the Gold-ringed Dragonfly *Cordulegaster boltonii*, and the Damselflies, Large Red *Pyrrhosoma nymphula*, and Emerald *Lestes sponsa*.

There was not a great wealth of bird life on this occasion, but Buzzards, Jays and Green Woodpeckers were seen by some and heard by all.

A goodly selection of fungi was to be found, given the early date and the recent cool conditions. In addition to the aforementioned *Amanitas* were listed another 19 species including: Ergot *Claviceps purpurea*, Red Tongue Fungus of Alder cones *Taphrini alni*, Blackening Waxcap *Hygrocybe conica* var. *conica*, *Russula ochroleuca* (under Beech) and *Melanoleuca excissa* (a good find). Under the Larches there was *Gomphidius maculatus*, Larch Bolete *Suillus grevillei* and (less common) *Suillus viscidus*.

Sundry rusts and smuts were listed by those who do such things and a myxomycete *Fuligo sceptica*, was found on a log following its strange life cycle. Alas, the very pale, almost white, Fallow Deer seen on the recent recce did not make an appearance and the clump of startlingly white Thyme *Thymus polytrichus*, also found on that occasion, had gone over.

It had been a very full day, with time to explore just a corner of this beautiful area.

John Watson

WHITLAW MOSS NNR

Date
Leader

2nd August
Jeff Waddell



Lyn Blades and Dorothy Stuart had driven almost the whole way in the torrential rain on flooded roads, before deciding to abandon the trip and return to Edinburgh. If they had pressed on they would have found eleven slightly more persistent members dripping on the edge of Lindean Reservoir and wondering if the effort had been worth it. However, Jeff Waddell's enthusiasm was so compelling that we

were quickly involved in his quest for unusual aquatic plants. Lindean loch is an SSSI and part of the larger Whitlaw Mosses NNR designated for Murder Moss and three other nearby mosses.

With bathoscope and grapnel he was able to introduce us to three species of Stoneworts or *Charaphytes* which are large and complex green algae. The gritty feel due to calcareous depositions on the thallus, the yellow-green colouration and the slight smell of garlic are all distinguishing features of these species. They thrive in low light intensities at depth in alkaline waters. *Chara rudis*, a nationally rare Stonewort was growing most robustly at this site in the deepest water. Two less-scarce species *C. virgula* and *Nitella flexilis* were also identified. Rooted in the bed of the reservoir were Spiked Water Milfoil *Myriophyllum spicatum* and Canadian Pondweed *Elodea canadensis*, with Shoreweed *Littorella uniflora*, near the edge. The surface of the open water was pink with spikes of Amphibious Bistort *Persicaria amphibia*. Ramshorn Snails *Planorbis* sp. and Great Pond Snails *Lymnaea stagnalis* were common on the weeds that were 'landed'. Other notable and unusual plants were found in the marshy grassland surrounding the open water, such as Water Plantain *Alisma plantago-aquatica*, Cowbane *Cicuta virosa* and Marsh Speedwell *Veronica scutellata*. By lunchtime, with rain relenting, we had also found several moths: Smoky Wainscot, Shaded Broad Bar, Yellowshell, and less unexpectedly Brown China Mark.

After lunch and a walk of several hundred metres we arrived at Murder Moss, one of the alkaline mires of the reserve, filling a long hollow in the undulating landscape. Scarce species such as Greater Spearwort *Ranunculus lingua* and Knotted Pearlwort *Sagina nodosa* were found immediately. Other than in the areas of Willow carr, the main emergent plants were Slender Sedge *Carex lasiocarpa* and Bog Bean *Menyanthes trifoliata*. From beneath the water we pulled out Greater Bladderwort *Utricularia vulgaris*, which soon involved lots of inspection of bladders by lens and conversation about insectivorous plants in general. Jeff's eagle eye also spotted Fen Pondweed *Potamogeton coloratus* to rival the equally rare Shining Pondweed *P. lucens* found earlier in deep water at Lindean. In mid afternoon the skies cleared and from then we were bathed in sunshine for the last of the day.

It encouraged many insects to emerge and even Reed Bunting and Yellowhammers sang. In addition to three species of Damselfly we quickly recorded Black and Common Darters and Common Hawker. Where had they been? As we left the moss, a striking moth, the Gold Spangle resting on Bog Bean was seen. We were thus prepared for a rush of Meadow Browns, Ringlets, Common Blues and the odd Dark Green Fritillary as we crossed into some calcareous grassland. Here Rock-rose *Helianthemum nummularium* and Field Scabious *Knautia arvensis* provided some farewell colour to a day of many surprises.

We were all very appreciative of Jeff's excellent preparation and his wide knowledge of the natural

history of the area stretching back to his childhood. It's good to welcome him home. We hope to be the continuing beneficiaries of his move back south.

Neville Crowther

AQUEDUCT to ALMONDELL

Date 9th August
Leader Andrew Gilchrist

Andrew had interpreted the weather pattern as promising hours of rain. How right he was! Fortunately there was no wind to contend with and Nats are not deterred by rain or mud. After a short walk on the road, eleven of us followed the path alongside the very full fast-flowing lade. This channel acts as a feeder for the Union Canal, bringing water from Cobbinshaws Reservoir. In some places the lade disappears underground, passing through beautifully constructed old stone tunnels. Looking over the valley we could see the River Almond far below.

Early arrivals at the aqueduct car park were rewarded by the sight of 36 Mistle Thrush in the air. Later Yellowhammer, Heron and 12 baby Swallows on a wire, were spotted.

Pink was the predominant colour for flowers. First there was a large patch of Welled Thistle *Carduus crispus* by the side of the road. By the water we saw lots of Marsh Woundwort *Stachys palustris*; at least three varieties of Willowherb; Pink purslane *Claytonia sibirica*; Water Forget-me-not *Myosotis scorpiodes* (some pink). One interesting non-pink flower growing in clumps in the side of the stream was the large Water Figwort *Scrophularia auriculata*.

Good planning meant that we reached the Visitor Centre just in time for lunch. There we were able to add cups of tea or coffee to our picnics and eat in comfort. This may be the first time the Nats were actually imprisoned. The kind lady ranger, having discovered us well settled in, rather than throw us out locked the centre for half an hour while she departed for her lunch.

On our release the rain had ceased and the sun was beginning to appear. The more energetic in the group accompanied Andrew on the final section of his planned circular walk, while the rest of us made our way through the woods to the South car park. On an old tree stump we found a lovely clump of fungus – hundreds of Fairies Bonnets *Coprinus disseminatus*. A good day in spite of the weather.

Lyn Blades



FAIRY CASTLE DEAN

Date 16th August
Leader Mary Clarkson

The purpose of this excursion was to look at the geology and botany of a valley in the Lammermuirs with the intriguing name of Fairy Castle Dean. The day started inauspiciously as we had to contend with the local flower show, a road closure, wind farm construction vehicles and tractors bringing in the harvest before we reached our starting point of Easter Aikengall Farm. However, the sun shone for us, which, after a wet week, made the effort of getting there worthwhile.

Fairy Castle Dean is an SWT Nature Reserve, one of four deep valleys, or deans, on the north-east side of the Lammermuir Hills. In general, the Lammermuirs are smooth, grassy, sheep country and it is a bit of a shock to find a steep-sided, rocky valley looking like something from the American West with pillars (the Fairy Castles) standing proud of the valley sides above scree fans and all in shades of orange-red. This part of the Lammermuirs is formed of conglomerates of Lower Old Red Sandstone age, which filled a large pre-Devonian valley south of Dunbar. Later erosion by melt-water from glaciers cut out the steep-sided valleys and formed the rocky pillars, which are so spectacular in this dean. Near the junction with Bladder Cleugh, another of the deans, a vertical basalt dyke has been intruded into the conglomerate above it, baking it, making it resistant to erosion. The small stream flowing along the bottom of the valley appears and disappears in places, depending on the weather conditions. However, on the day of our visit the water flow was plentiful.

The valley has an interesting flora. Rock-rose *Helianthemum nummularium*, whose leaves are the food plant of the rare Northern Brown Argus butterfly *Aricia artaxerxes*, grows in the dean, and sections on the valley sides have been cordoned off to try to prevent grazing by sheep. Although it is understood that these butterflies are not doing well, members of our party did spot one or two. It was a pleasant surprise to find a large area of Stone Bramble *Rubus saxatilis* looking spectacular with its bright red fruits just at their best, as well as Goldenrod *Solidago virgaurea*, Common Butterwort *Pinguicula vulgaris*, Wild Thyme *Thymus polytrichus*, Common Valerian *Valeriana officinalis* and Harebell *Campanula rotundifolia*. The most beautiful flower of the day, however, was Grass of Parnassus *Parnassia palustris* with its delicate green-veined petals. Other butterflies spotted included Grayling *Hipparchia semele*, Red Admiral *Vanessa atalanta* and Common Blue *Polyommatus icarus*. As we climbed out of the Dean we were sped on our way by the call of a Ring Ousel and we arrived back at Oldhamstocks just in time for a cup of tea at the flower show.

Mary Clarkson



ROXBURGH to KELSO

Date 23rd August
Leader Lyn Blades

There wasn't really a proper car park at the meeting place, or at least not one big enough for us to fit in without some fiddling about, but the sun was shining and there were Butterflies on Buddleia to watch, which got us off to a very good start. We recorded Red Admiral, Peacock, Small Tortoiseshell, Large White and, much to our delight, one Comma.

With difficulty our leader persuaded us to set off on the actual walk. It was one we had done some years ago and we thought there would be some interesting plants near the beginning. First we found the large leaves of Hairy Violet *Viola hirta* by the hedge, as well as Lords-and-Ladies *Arum maculatum* in fruit. On the river bank below we could see large white Bindweed *Calystegia sepium* and Himalayan Balsam *Impatiens glandulifera*. Over the bridge there was Tansy *Tanacetum vulgare*, White Campion *Silene latifolia* and Welled Thistle *Carduus crispus* along the roadside verge; that was a good enough list to keep us happy.

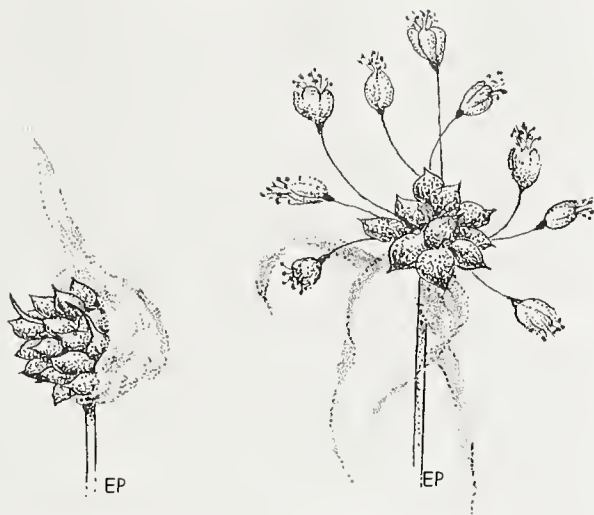
Now we had reached the railway. Unfortunately the track was very muddy and downright wet in places, but where it was more open we came across the handsome Field Scabious *Knautia arvensis*, small pink Convolvulus *Convolvulus arvensis* and a different-looking Tormentil, with 4 and 5 petalled flowers, and that, we decided, was Trailing Tormentil *Potentilla anglica*.

After lunch the way took us through the static caravan site, across the bridge and down on to the banks of the Teviot; no Grey Wagtails unfortunately, but we did see Yellow Loosestrife *Lysimachia vulgaris* and some large white mushrooms which Mary Clarkson said were *Agaricus xanthoderma*. And so we continued below the mound that is nearly all that remains of Roxburgh Castle, where in 1460 King James II was blown up by his own cannon while trying to retake it from the English!

Our next find led to a discussion. It was Crow Garlic, wasn't it? Maybe not. Nobody had a book, so we waited for Jackie Muscott to catch up and give a ruling. It turned out to be Keeled Garlic *Allium carinatum* distinguished by the two long papery bracts hanging from the flowerhead.

Back then by the fields to where we'd left our cars, but the butterflies had all gone.

Jean Murray



CROW GARLIC
Allium scorodoprasum

KEELED GARLIC
Allium carinatum

MUSSELBURGH

Date 30th August
Leader Bill Clunie

Twenty enthusiasts, hoping for a break in the abysmal summer weather, met Bill Clunie at Goose Green. We scanned the Esk estuary, keen to spot the unusual. It was nice to see 'crucifixing' Cormorants. Small numbers of Turnstones, still with breeding orange plumage alongside their black and white siblings in winter dress, probed along the tideline. There were at least two family parties of Goosanders numbering in total 15 which were perhaps indicative of breeding success higher up the Esk. Large numbers of gulls, Mute Swans, Eiders in eclipse and waders including several Oystercatchers piping and 'dancing the quadrille' peppered the foreshore and shallows. As the tide began to rise large groups of Oystercatchers began to vacate the mussel beds and beach, flying close overhead onto the lagoons.

Some of us were distracted by good numbers of flowering leguminous species including Hairy Tare *Vicia hirsuta*, Yellow Melilot *Melilotos sp.*, Black Medick *Medicago lupulina*, Tufted Vetch *Vicia cracca* and several Clovers. And later on we found Yellow Vetch *Vicia lutea*, an introduced species, rare in the Lothians. Along with grasses, Goosefoots, Oraches and Composites, all gave promise of a seed crop around the edge of the lagoons capable of feeding wintering flocks of Finches, Skylarks and Buntings in a few months time.

We moved round to view the sea and were delighted to have a fly-past, as Bill had promised, of a lone Whooper Swan which unusually had summered here. It was followed by a single Common Sandpiper with its characteristically quivering bowed wings. Telescopes were brought into play to view the Forth beyond the flocks of Eiders. In the flat calm Bill pointed out a Red-throated Diver and several Velvet Scoters. Natalie and Joanie picked out distant Razorbills and we were all pleased to see three species of Grebe, more than a score of Great Crested, five Slavonians perhaps from a Scottish nesting population which sadly has had a

recent decline, then three scarce Red-necked Grebes which have their closest constant breeding sites in Denmark.

Stomachs began to rumble, and we took over two of the hides overlooking the scrapes for lunch. There cannot have been many more engrossing sites to eat our lunch. With the tide at the full the scrapes were overflowing with waders and other waterfowl. Several Snipe tested our powers of detection amongst the rushes. About a hundred Bar-tailed Godwit and half as many Curlew dreamed away the balmy afternoon on the far side of the pond, whilst many Redshank, Dunlin and perhaps 30 Black-tailed Godwit were busy stitching the mud in their quest for food. Half a dozen Golden Plover and an elusive Ruff provided us with amusing snatches of conversation concerning their exact location.

Too soon we were off again and after a dearth of Passerines in the morning were lucky to find a family party of Wheatears on their long haul to Africa, and several twittering groups of Linnets. Four Grey Partridge exploded into the air and skimmed across the vegetation to disappear into long grass far away. In the bottom of the dry westerly lagoon around 30 Kittiwakes called distinctly, initially unseen midst a mixed collection of other gulls. Our search for the reported Little Gull went unrewarded, but over 50 Ringed Plover dotted the grey ash surface dispersed over a large area. Before departing a last quick dash over to the Esk rewarded us with a Shoveler and a lone Canada Goose. It had been a better day both for weather and birds than we could have hoped for.

Neville Crowther



GREAT CRESTED GREBE

SLAVONIAN GREBE

HERIOT WATT, RICCARTON

Date 6th September
Leader Eunice Smith

The Nats outing to the grounds of Heriot Watt University at Riccarton on the western outskirts of Edinburgh coincided with Freshers' Day on 6 September. Fears that members might be hi-jacked and enrolled for intensive courses of study or (more realistically) might not be able to find a parking place were ill-founded.

The university inherited an estate which dates back 700 years. The formal gardens were laid out in the 18th Century and the beautiful grounds still contain many interesting and exotic trees. For a period during the Second World War Riccarton was an army base. The present university complex has been constructed as relatively low-level buildings and every effort is being made to conserve and manage the heritage of this beautiful and interesting site.

The origins of the University date back to 1821 when the Edinburgh School of Arts was founded as the first Mechanics Institute, in order to give ordinary people access to education and technology. The more recent name of Heriot Watt commemorates the educational benefactor George Heriot (1563-1623) and the scientist James Watt (1736-1819). In 1969 the University moved from central Edinburgh to Riccarton and the campus is now also the home of Europe's first Research Park.

It has been a good year for fungus and the grounds of the 380-acre campus proved to be rich in pickings. The group started off in the surrounds of the car-park and immediately came across several of the 'usual suspects' such as the Brown Roll-rim *Paxillus involutus* and the relatively common *Boletus chrysenteron* with its typical red hues. Many *Scleroderma* earthballs were nestling together close to the main traffic route. A more puzzling find was that collected by 12 year-old Fraser Donachie on his very first fungus outing. He retrieved an insignificant-looking gill fungus from the ground where it was lying among twigs and branches under a Yew, and transported it carefully on the palm of his hand without crushing or handling. It was not recognised by anyone present and in vain the area was searched for other specimens. The fungus had that special niggling 'something' about it and so was stored away carefully as a fungus worthy of a post-foray cogitation and perhaps referral. The hunch about the specimen proved to be justified when it was identified by Professor Roy Watling as *Hohenbuehelia mastrucata*. Thanks to Fraser this Red Data List specimen now resides in the herbarium of The Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh.

On the other side of the avenue the Penny Bun, *B. edulis* was showing the network on the stipe. Good specimens of the Fly Agaric *Amanita muscaria* caught our attention and when Mary Clarkson pointed out that the Waxcap *Hygrocybe reidii* has a smell of honey we all had a good sniff and agreed. We visited the lake and admired the Swans and seven large cygnets. At the end of that walkway *Gloeophyllum sepiarium* was growing in its typical habitat between the cracks on the wooden slats of the bridge handrail. (This fungus has a completely different structure from all other genera.) When thoughts of lunch came upon us we made our way to the central complex and occupied very comfortable seating inside the building along the 'bridge' to the canteen. After lunch one member of the group took us to see a large patch of spectacular specimens of *Leucopaxillus giganteus*. Many were the size of large dinner plates and had spotless white surfaces. They looked as though they had just been

taken out of the dishwasher and were awaiting the concoctions of the best TV chef!

As we moved towards the mature woodland we passed a large group of *Agaricus* but after that specimens seemed to become more difficult to find. Before lunch *Ganoderma australe* had been noticed on Oak near the lake and here *G. applanatum* was noted growing at the base of a dead Pine. *Macrolepiota rhacodes* lurked under the mature conifers and the small innocent-looking (but poisonous) *Inocybe geophylla* was evident in large numbers. Many clusters of *Collybia confluens* huddled together and a more robust *C. peronata* stood firmly on its Wood Woolly Foot. The forayers were encouraged to smell one of the clustered small bracket fungi on some of the trees so that in future noses alone might be used to identify *Bjerkandera adusta*. Although the Deceiver *Laccaria laccata* was found specimens of the amethyst coloured *L. amethystea* more readily caught our attention.

Throughout the day a good selection of Milkcaps was detected. Among them were examples of *Lactarius blennius* - dull olive-green in colour with concentric dark spots; *L. deterrimus* with its distinctive punctate stipe and orange milk; the lovely pink *L. torminosus* with a 'furry' appearance; and the dark *L. turpis* which goes by the common name of Ugly Milkcap. Like children in a school canteen we descended with whoops of joy on a well-known and easily recognised friend when we espied Plums and Custard *Tricholomopsis rutilans*.

As we turned back towards the car park the way was blocked by a mature, multi-branched Silver Birch lying across the path. Earlier in the week the leader had stopped on that very spot for a long conversation with a visitor to the University. The newly-fallen tree was negotiated with relief, and the speculation as to whether fungal damage or water-ponding had caused the tree to fall was unresolved as there was no apparent evidence for either. Presumably strong winds may have been the major reason for the demise of the Birch.

On an earlier visit the leader had been delighted to find a fungal 'plum' i.e. something uncommon which she had been able to recognise! As the group got back to the car park she traversed to and fro along the cultivated bed between the road and hedges. However it seemed that the fungus had disappeared so she had to take leave of the group without displaying the prized specimen. The border was searched again and again after the group had left and at last patience was rewarded when specimens of the yellowy-orange Hare's Ears *Otidea onotica* revealed themselves. But more of interest was to come when a patch of a similar, but dark-brown, fungus was spotted nearby. At first this was thought to be Toad's Ears *O. bufonia*. The specimen was later identified by Roy Watling as *O. cochleate* - the second find of the day to feature on the Red Data list.

The number of species found was considerable and some finds proved to be really special. A small brown fungus found on cones under a beautiful large Cedar escaped identification but that alone may afford an excuse for a return visit. Although chilly the day had

been bright and the rain which had plagued Edinburgh throughout the season had stayed away. We returned home counting our blessings.

Eunice Smith

(A full list of fungi is available on request)

COVE

Date 20th September
Leader Neville Crowther



Cove village lies on the cliff top just over the Berwickshire border. Before we descended to the harbour a dozen of us stood on the cliff top and were able to scan more than 10 kilometres of coast to left and right. To the west, the Torness nuclear power station dominates the view, with Bass Rock beyond. On the eastern skyline are the cliffs of Siccar Point where in 1783 James Hutton famously identified a striking example of an unconformity, a key structure in the developing understanding of geological evolution.

As the dominating feature of the coastal landscape, the geology played a major role in all our various interests on this day. Littoral zonation was admirably picked out by the bands of colour along the rocky shore where lichens were particularly outstanding and included *Verrucaria* and *Lichina spp.* (lower black zone), *Caloplaca* and *Xanthoria spp.* (middle yellow zone) and *Anaptychia*, *Raunaliua* and *Lecanora spp.* (upper grey zone). Everyone spent some time exploring rock pools near the harbour, finding Hermit Crabs and Prawns by the score, but little else of note. The cliffs here fall steeply to the beach, leaving only a little room for a narrow band of shingle and embryo dune plants. Lyme Grass *Leymus arenarius*, Marram *Ammophila arenaria*, Sea Sandwort *Honckenya peploides*, Curled Dock *Rumex crispus* and Frosted Orache *Atriplex laciniata* were noted in this strip. Two headlands to the east, a few square metres of the rare Sea Wormwood *Seriphidium maritimum*, were found in this same zone. Nearby in a rock pool on an exposed promontory we found the locally rare green Seaweed *Codium tomentosum* which resembled the vertical fingers of a fresh water sponge.

After lunch some returned to the cliff top while the more agile of the party walked along the foot of the cliffs to Pease Bay. As one travels from west to east the sedimentary rocks are first of Lower Carboniferous and then of Devonian age. One travels back in time, so to speak, from 330 - 390 million years ago. The former are sandstones, cementstones and marls with occasional narrow strata of mudstone, shale and coal. These so-called Scremerston coals are numerous but very thinly bedded and commercially worthless. All these Carboniferous beds dip to the north north east, some very steeply. The harder beds stand proud, as reefs below the high tide mark and as cliffs and stacks. Sea caves and many recent landslips mark softer strata. The heavy rains of this summer were responsible for

many of these slides.

Towards Pease Bay lie the gently dipping Old Red Sandstones of Devonian age which pre-date the Lower Carboniferous. They are coloured by differing amounts of the mineral haematite (ferric oxide) and so vary from honey coloured to deep red and maroon. The attractiveness of these exposures is further enhanced by strong cross-bedding.

We found considerable botanical interest in the maritime cliff grassland which contains many calcicole plants. The most notable species were Sea Campion *Silene uniflora*, Sea Plantain *Plantago maritima*, Thyme *Thymus polytrichus*, Mouse-ear Hawkweed *Pilosella officinarum*, Meadow Oat-grass *Helictotrichon pratense*, Red Fescue *Festuca rubra*, Tall Fescue *Festuca arundinacea*, Hemp Agrimony *Eupatorium cannabinum*, Perennial Sow-thistle *Sonchus arvensis*, and Devil's-bit Scabious *Succisa pratensis* and Spring Vetch *Vicia lathyroides* flowering out of season.

The fragmented party gradually coalesced as we wandered back along the cliff top to Cove. This track is the final part of the Southern Uplands Way which runs from the Mull of Galloway to Cockburnspath.

Neville Crowther

BOWHILL COUNTRY PARK

Date 27th September
Leader Mike Richardson

Bowhill Estate near Selkirk seemed a long way to go for a fungus foray but the drive was well worthwhile as we had a splendid day with beautiful weather. We parked behind Bowhill House and made a circuit of the nearer of the ornamental lakes in the grounds. The woodland through which we forayed was largely broad-leaved, Beech, with some Oak and Birch but areas of conifer, too. Although the ground was surprisingly dry after a wet summer, there was an amazing variety of fungi.

We started in an area where Beech predominated and typical Beech species abounded, the honey-coloured Geranium Brittle-gill *Russula fellea* with its scent of Pelargoniums (or stewed apples to some) and the very acid Beechwood sickener *Russula nobilis* (formerly known as *R. mairei*) with its bright scarlet cap and pure white stem. Beech Milkcap *Lactarius bleuuius* was there in abundance with its viscid brownish-green, zoned cap and acid white milk and the grey *Tricholoma sciodes* many of whose gills have a dark edge and whose flesh, when chewed, is bitter. Moving on, the most perfect Beefsteak Fungus *Fistulina hepatica* I have ever seen was found on an Oak stump, its tongue-like, wine-red cap looking just like a succulent steak oozing brown-red juice. Oakbug Milkcap *Lactarius quietus* whose smell has been described as 'like bed-bugs' was also found in this area.

A bracket fungus, long past its best, on another Oak stump, was identified by our leader as Chicken of the Woods *Laetiporus sulphureus* an early season fungus with a very soft context. Nearby, he also identified slender, dark brown velvety fungi with yellow-edged caps as Cucumber Caps *Macrocyttidia cucumis* which have a distinctive smell of cucumber and a distinctive microscopic feature on their gills of enormously large cystidia. We sat at the edge of the lake to eat our sandwiches in the sunshine and had an equally productive time in the afternoon. Damaged branches of an old Beech were festooned with the viscid Porcelain Fungus *Oudemansiella mucida* and on the ground below was Rooting Shank *Xerula radicata* perhaps better known by its former name of *Oudemansiella radicata* which, not unsurprisingly, has a deeply rooting stem. Nearby were Chanterelles *Cantharellus cibarius* as well as the less brightly coloured but similarly shaped Trumpet Chanterelles *Cantharellus tubaeformis*. Everywhere we went there were Amethyst Deceivers *Laccaria amethystina*; never have I seen so many. The most unusual find of the day was made by Elizabeth Farquharson and not identified until later. A fungus with a dark, almost black cap and a very thick stem but which had yielded no milk was found by Roy Watling to be *Lactarius flexuosus* for which there are few records in the South of Scotland.

We particularly enjoy Mike Richardson's forays as he has lots of tips and extra information to give us, all done with a light touch, which adds greatly to the enjoyment of the day - and helps failing memories.

Mary Clarkson

GLENKINNON BURN

Date 15th November
Leader Jean Murray

This was not an area known to the Nats, but well known to me as it's near home and one of my favourite places. When we looked at mosses at Peebles it was springtime, so some which were obvious then because they were fruiting, were not so this time.

We got off to an easy start with the Shaggy Teddy Bear *Rhytidiadelphus triquetrus* on the ground. We looked at cypress-like *Hypnum*s which make fine-to-more-robust mats on trees and walls, but one Ash had something much more exciting cascading down the trunk: it was Flat Neckera *Neckera complanata*. I had been walking past it for years. My excuse is that a small patch of Meadow Saxifrage has been struggling for survival at its base, so my eyes were always firmly on the ground, checking for leaves.

Next came the fern-like Tamarisk Moss *Thuidium tamariscinum*, common in this kind of woodland. Near the river we started finding soft yellowish-green patches of Broom Fork Moss *Dicranum scoparium* on trees. We didn't find it at Peebles, nor was there much here, which is surprising as I tend to think of it as common. It's a handsome moss when seen in quantity.

We crossed a side burn, started up the hill and stopped to read the first information board, one of a series at intervals along the newish path, because this area adjoins a camp site for youth organisations. A patch of bare peaty ground was covered with Heath Star Moss *Campylopus introflexus*. This English name is helpful: the upright leaves end in long hyaline (clear) points which turn back when dry, giving the tufts a starry look. It's interesting too, as it's an alien, having only arrived in Britain in 1941. Growing beside it was the small Hair Moss *Pogonatum (Polytrichum) aloides* and further along the path, its larger relative *P. formosum*, the common woodland species. Both have toothed leaves.

Still climbing, we had a view over to Ashiesteel House and surrounding hills. Where our path met a broader forestry track we side-tracked a little to look at a bank of red-stemmed mosses, the ferny Step Moss *Hylocomium splendens*, Lawn Moss *Rhytidiadelphus squarrosus* and *R. triquetrus* again. A fallen log behind was blanketed with Wavy Flat Moss or White Worms *Plagiothecium undulatum*. We saw more of it on stumps further on.

Chewed cones and obvious 'dining table' remains showed that Red Squirrels are around. We chose a sheltered spot nearby for lunch. What else had we seen? A Heron, a Jay and a fleeting glance of a Dipper. Fungi worth mentioning were Birch Polypore *Piptoporus betulinus* and Hoof Fungus *Fomes fomentarius* found together on the same tree several times, an unusual occurrence Mary Clarkson said.

We still had time, but we ran out of path. I knew where I'd find *Thamnobryum alopecurum* lurking in the shade by the burn. Rough upright stems give this moss the appearance of a miniature tree. On the bridge we looked at *Grimmia pulvinata* (grey cushions with buried capsules) and *Bryum capillare*, with lots of pendulous green capsules which turn red and horizontal when ripe.

We decided to finish with a short walk along the Tweed and were rewarded with a party of Long-tailed Tits, a leaping Salmon, a Ruby Tiger Moth Caterpillar crossing the track, and rings of Clouded Funnel Agaric *Clitocybe nebularis*. It had been seen before lunch but not by everybody. Then some of us rounded off the day with tea and shortbread at Clovenfords Hotel.

Jean Murray

RIVER ALMOND

Date 29th December
Leader Janet Watson

Three years ago we walked from Silverknowes to Cramond Brig and back before having a late lunch at Lauriston Farmhouse, and there had been a request to repeat this as several members are not able to walk now nor drive far, but enjoy meeting fellow members. The outing proved very popular and about twenty-five people did the walk this time. It was a dry day and there were the usual Oystercatchers, Curlews and Redshank along the shore. Some people were fortunate to spot a Kingfisher up the river. After looking at the miniature Shetland ponies near Cramond Brig we headed more quickly back to Silverknowes. Not everyone on the walk went for lunch but others joined us at the Farmhouse, where we were a party of 30 who enjoyed the meal and stayed chatting happily for quite a time.



A Kingfisher was seen this year. No sign of the Otter which some of us saw here three years ago.

Janet Watson



GOOSANDER and her chicks seen by Jackie on the River Avon in May

Happy memories of many occasions enjoying tea on the lawn at Kilcreggan with Eric and Eileen



WWT CAERLAVEROCK

One of the WWT leaflets states:

14-15th March

WWT Caerlaverock is a place where the wild world still has the power to touch, thrill and inspire.

And I for one cannot disagree with that description. I and my passengers, Julia, Elspeth and Natalie, drove down on the Friday afternoon, and there was another carload of folk already there when we arrived.

Up early next morning (some earlier than others, but no names mentioned!), and breakfasted, we all went our different ways until the rest of the party joined us; some went up the Farmhouse Tower, some to the shop, some out for a stroll. The weekend proper started with the daily wildfowl feed at the Whooper Pool at 11.00am. This proved to be a bit disappointing in terms of numbers, the Swans clearly not yet hungry enough. Not so disappointing was the walk from the farmhouse to the Peter Scott Observatory at the Pond. The sight of an exceptionally early House Martin, flying past over the fields, really got us going, with a good number of the regular birds – Sparrow, Pied Wagtail, Feral Pigeons, Starling, Yellowhammer, Great Tit, Robin, Wren, Dunnock, Reed Bunting, Blackbird, Song and Mistle Thrush, Crow, Rook, Chaffinch and Greenfinch.

From the Observatory itself we watched the usual collection of wildfowl, especially the Whooper Swans, with adult and juvenile birds together giving us an excellent comparison; and we were able to compare Whoopers and Mute Swans too. Of course I haven't mentioned the Barnacle geese, ever-present, flying backwards and forwards from roost to one feeding place and another. Simply constant. Caerlaverock's Barnies arrive each winter in October from their breeding grounds in the Norwegian Svalbard archipelago in the High Arctic, staying till April. The population here has recovered, from fewer than 500 birds in the 1940s to about 20,000 today.

Throughout the day, we all managed to see a great deal. Along the Avenue and before reaching the Avenue Tower, we passed the Teal Pond and spent time at the Campbell Hide. From these points we had excellent views of Mallard, Wigeon, Shoveler, Teal, Tufted Duck, Moorhen, Canada Geese, Barnacle Geese, Pied Wagtail, Oystercatcher, Peewit, Gadwall, Dabchick, Long-tailed Tit, Shelduck and Curlew.

At the Avenue Hide, we were rewarded with more to watch on the mammal front, with Brown Hares feeding and dozing in the weak sun, and a family of Roe Deer wandering about at the bottom of the Low Middle field. We also watched quite a large flock of Starlings displaying over the salt marsh.

The pre-dinner highlight was to see the Badgers coming out to feed on the supply of nuts and sweet sticky stuff spread over the logs and under the boulders outside the farm's back window. We were all quiet as mice as we watched the spectacular view right in front of us, only a yard or two away.

After Sunday breakfast, we saw the wildfowl being fed again, this time at the Folly Pond behind the farmhouse. We had clear views of two Whoopers fitted with satellite trackers, a project being undertaken by the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust. To watch real-time, go to www.wwt.org.uk/tracking/573/super_whooper.html ENHS subsequently made a donation to this project.

The morning was spent more or less as Saturday, but with some special additions. On leaving the farmhouse, we took a look at the nearby feeders and were rewarded with some lovely Siskins. We got really close up as they were not bothered by us at all, so intent were they on their feeding. Tree Sparrow was spotted which I sadly missed; and we were able to catch up on the birds of prey which had been absent the day before, with fantastic views of a Hen Harrier and Peregrine. On the botanical side, not much to be seen in flower, except Lesser Celandine, Primrose and Daisy.

After lunch we headed home, stopping at Caerlaverock Castle en route. Some of us were exceptionally lucky to see a bat flying round the castle, a Pipistrelle, but which one, a 45 or a 55? Natalie rushed back to the car to get her bat detector, but sadly the creature had gone by the time she returned, breathless! But Elspeth, Julia and I got superb views of it flying round and round before disappearing over the moat towards the trees. A fitting end to a superb weekend.

Thanks to the Excursion Committee for organising a brilliant weekend, and to the Staff at the WWT Centre, particularly to Richard Hesketh.

Joanie McNaughton



WHARFEDALE

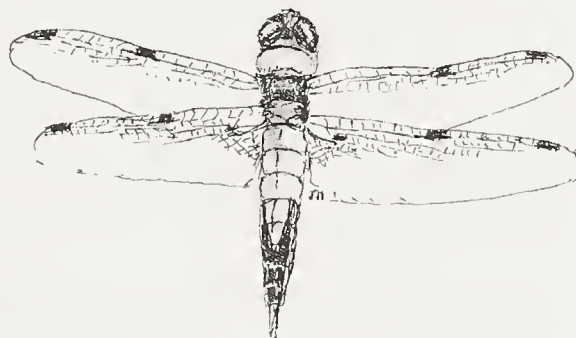
Monday, 9th to Friday 13th June

MONDAY at HIGH BATTS

High Batts is close to Ripon on the floodplain of the River Ure. It is one of the best known of the Yorkshire Naturalists Trust reserves.

By prior arrangement, the depute warden, Robert Adams, met us as we arrived in ones and twos in the early afternoon. We were given a splendid round tour which included a well equipped bird hide, several riverside observation screens, meadows, open woodland and small ponds. The reserve is tended, and visited by a dedicated group of local naturalists, some of whom we met on our meanders.

Colourful flower meadows were dominated by swathes of Dame's Violet *Hesperis matronalis*, Red Campion *Silene dioica*, Burnet Rose *Rosa pimpinellifolia* and Comfrey *Symphytum x uplandicum*. Three species of Damselfly were numerous in this tall vegetation: Azure and Large Red in greater numbers, but outshone by the sapphire males and emerald females of the Banded Demoiselle. It is no accident that I use the names of precious stones to describe them. Four-spotted Chasers were also in flight and were for most of us the first Dragonflies of the season. Orange Tip butterflies were still present in good numbers, as were Brimstones, which are unusual for us. The scrub woodland contained Alder Buckthorn *Frangula alnus*, the larval food plant for the latter. We were shown Spindle trees *Euonymus europaeus* nurtured for their rarity now that their economic value has gone. Defending patches of sunshine between the trees were Speckled Wood butterflies. Great Spotted Woodpeckers drummed and even fed young in their nestholes. The song of Blackcaps and Garden Warblers confused most of us, unlike the Chiffchaffs and Willow Warblers. On the river, Kingfishers were flashes of brilliance. It was a charming place to break our journey and we left reluctantly. Fourteen had visited on the way south and five others were to do so on the way north at the end of the week.



FOUR-SPOTTED CHASER
Libellula Quadrimaculata, were in flight

Neville Crowther

MONDAY - VERY LATE !!



The rural location of the Confluence Centre provided the opportunity to do some on-site moth-trapping in a different part of the country. Neville had brought along his portable 12w actinic trap to set up in the car park, and Roger set up his 40w mains actinic outside the kitchen. At first, early visitors were all Common Swift Moths. Later on, the numbers increased to include a Cockchafer Beetle, a Small Elephant Hawk, a Brimstone moth and a Spectacle - a species new to both of us. However the session was ruined by swarms of midges that became really unpleasant. We retired into the car to shelter for some time before doing the final rounds of the traps to find Shears, Dusky Brocade, Middle Barred Minor and Clouded-bordered Brindle moths. After this we realised that someone had locked up the Centre leaving us trapped outside! Several vain attempts were made to attract attention at room windows, after which it looked like a night in the president's car was the only option. Eventually repeated and loud knocking on the window of Tom's room at long last proved successful, so we were spared a night out in the car. We put some specimens in the fridge for others to enjoy the following morning.

Roger Holme

Some of us had a less than perfect start to our holiday. While the lucky ones were watching Banded Demoiselles in the flower meadows at High Batts, we were sitting, albeit in sunshine, in the village of Abington, awaiting rescue by the AA. In the early afternoon, with my poor car on the back of a lorry, and the three of us in the cab, it was back to Edinburgh. We had splendid views of the Borders scenery from our high seats. Fortunately arriving at the garage before closing time, passengers and luggage were transferred to Margaret's car and we set out once again. Darkness had fallen by the time we left the motorway, and after a long day, driving on the narrow roads for the last part of the journey was difficult. We arrived safely in Malham at 10.30pm. Fortunately having managed to phone ahead we were not locked out. After a night's sleep and a good breakfast we were all set for the next day's outing.

Lyn Blades

On TUESDAY we went to MALHAM

A party of 28 Nats and friends met in sunshine at the Malham Tarn car park on the first full day of our holiday, and set off to walk round the lake. We were soon seeing interesting lime-loving plants - Moonwort *Botrychium lunaria*, Mountain Pansy *Viola lutea* and Quaking Grass *Briza media* - while Skylarks rejoiced overhead. Salad Burnet *Sanguisorba minor*, Marsh Valerian *Valeriana dioica*, Northern Marsh Orchid *Dactylorhiza purpurella* and beautiful clusters of surprisingly tall Birdseye Primrose *Primula farinosa* soon followed, while Small Heath Butterflies *Coenympha pamphilus* flitted about.

There was a diversion to watch a pair of Nuthatches feeding their young in a tree - then more botanical goodies, Downy Oat-grass *Helictotrichon pubescens* and Hairy Rock-cress *Arabis hirsuta* before we arrived at the Field Centre and sat down on the lawn for lunch. Pity they had recently mown the lawn, as they had chopped off the flower heads of Hoary Plantain *Plantago media*, leaving only the rosettes (which can be confused with those of Greater Plantain). Hoary Plantain is the most beautiful of the Plantains, and the only one which is insect pollinated, so it's perhaps not surprising that it's perfumed and has masses of showy pink anthers. We used to call it Scent Bottles when we were kids.



MARSH VALERIAN
Valeriana dioica

Then on to the hide, where we were able to watch Great Crested Grebes and a Coot at nest. The female Grebes were sitting, while the males, most attentive husbands, kept bringing material to augment the nest. There was also a Mallard with young. A wetter, slightly more acid area produced a number of sedges, including Lesser Tussock Sedge *Carex diandra* (which doesn't necessarily produce tussocks) and Brown Sedge *Carex disticha*; also Early Purple Orchid *Orchis mascula*, Globeflower *Trollius europaeus* and Cranberry *Vaccinium oxycoccos*. Meadow Pipits and Curlews were out on the moorland and Willow Warblers in nearby trees.

The last part of the walk, along roads, was a bit of a drag, and some of the party then headed for the teashops of Malham. Others however set out on a rough walk to Malham Cove. The first part of the track was bounded by calcareous rocky banks, rich with Blue Moor-grass *Sesleria caerulea*. Then we were on to a rather unpleasant patch of limestone pavement where the grykes were sometimes wider than the strips of rock between. However it was here Roger found what was probably the most interesting plant of the day - Baneberry *Actaea spicata*. Some spikes were in good flower, others had green berries which turn shiny black when ripe. As the name suggests the berries are poisonous.

After a steep stepped descent we were in sight of the cove, where a small population of native Jacob's Ladder *Polemonium caeruleum* is protected by a fence. The cove itself is very impressive. House Martins and a Peregrine were nesting on the cliffs, and Swifts were busy catching flies round about, while down below a Green Woodpecker played hide-and-seek with the photographers.

Everyone met up at Malham, too late for tea now, but the loos were still open! And there was time to sit in the sun for a while, watching Sparrows and Starlings bathing in a shallow stream, while Swallows flew overhead. Anne Tupholme, who had joined the party and was due to take us out the next day, said she had never seen Malham looking so beautiful, so we were very lucky!

Jackie Muscott

..... And later in the afternoon to the GLOBE FLOWER RESERVE

One of the unexpected benefits of giving Anne Tupholme a lift back to her car at the end of our Malham walk was a brief diversion to the smallest of YNT reserves hidden behind high walls at an obscure road junction. On peeping over this wall, our eyes were assailed by a sea of colour from the flowering herbs in a small clearing : the golden yellow of Globe flowers *Trollius europaeus* and Lady's Mantle *Alchemilla vulgaris*, the mauves of Wood Cranesbill *Geranium sylvaticum*, pinks of Melancholy Thistle *Cirsium heterophyllum* and Water Avens *Geum rivale*, cream of Meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria* and the white filigree of several Umbellifers. Neither stile nor gate exists. There is no need to enter.

'Tis well that it is hidden as such a delight would not last long if publicised.

Neville Crowther

WEDNESDAY was GRASS WOOD AND DEEPPDALE

The following morning we met up with Anne Tupholme for a tour of Grass Wood, an Ash/Hazel wood on limestone. The wood was the site of an Iron Age settlement, and later a Brigantine fort from the Roman period. Later it was managed by coppicing, the wood being used for lead smelting, and more recently still conifers were planted. Grass Wood is now in the care of the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust who are gradually removing the conifers and resuming coppicing.

Coppicing keeps a tree 'young' and produces a sustainable supply of wood. It is particularly good for the ground flora, since periodically cutting back sections of the wood lets in the light without removing the protection the trees provide. The ground flora was very interesting as it included most of the common woodland plants like Wood Anemones *Anemone nemorosa* and Bluebells *Hyacinthoides non-scripta*, together with a number of limestone rarities, and none of the non-native plants we are so used to in the Lothians.

Rarities included Herb Paris *Paris quadrifolia*, Lily-of-the-Valley *Convallaria majalis* and the two Solomon's Seals *Polygonatum multiflorum* and *P. odoratum*. The Solomon's Seal we see around Edinburgh is usually the hybrid between the two *P. x hybridum*, of garden origin. There were also three contrasting members of the *Rubus* genus growing in a rather similar way: Raspberry *Rubus idaeus*, Stone Bramble *R. saxatilis*, which has much smaller flowers and Dewberry *R. caesius* with much larger flowers. I'm more used to seeing Stone Bramble crawling around on a rock face than growing upright through other vegetation, while Dewberry, a thin-stemmed Bramble-like plant with weak prickles, is rare north of the Border.

Shrubs in the wood included Guelder Rose *Viburnum opulus* which is found wild in Scotland (but is frequently planted as an 'amenity' shrub), Spindle *Euonymus europaeus* and Buckthorn *Rhamnus catharticus*. The latter two are lime-lovers, rare and usually introduced in Scotland.

The birds were disappointing, for although we heard Willow Warblers, the Nuthatches, Woodpeckers and Pied Flycatchers, reportedly found there, did not put in an appearance. Perhaps our party was too large and noisy.

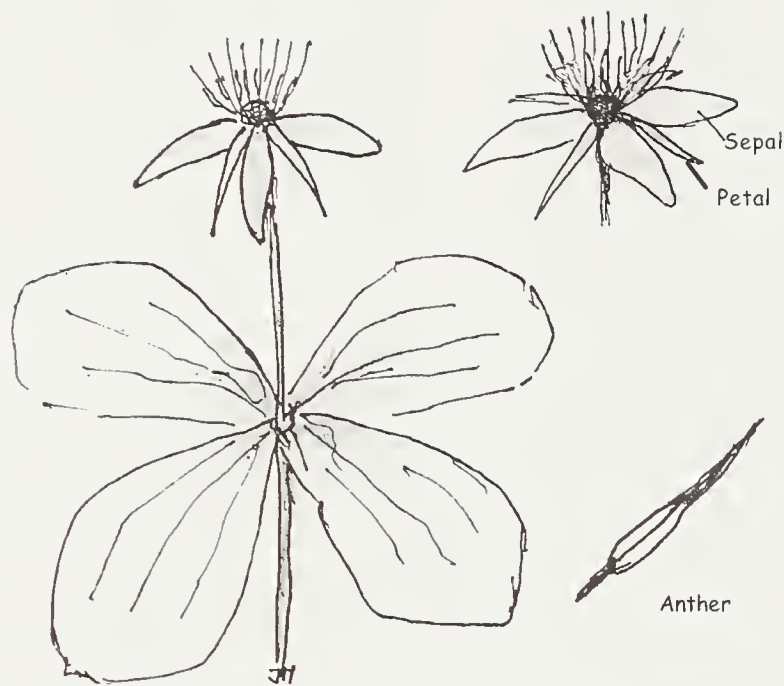
After lunch we paid a visit to the Centre where most of the party were staying and watched Yellow Wagtails feeding on the lawn. Here we had a welcome cup of tea before moving on to Deepdale for a short walk beside the River Wharfe. We passed a wildflower meadow which Anne assured us was not at its best, but there were plenty of lime-loving plants by the river. These included both Oat Grasses *Helictotrichon pratense* and *H. pubescens*, Rough Hawkbit *Leontodon hispidus*, Birdseye Primrose *Primula farinosa*, Limestone Bedstraw *Galium sternerii*, Mossy Saxifrage *Saxifraga hypnoides* and possibly Small Scabious *Scabiosa columbaria*.

The bird lovers did better here. There were Dippers and Grey Wagtails on the river, Pied Wagtails and Sandpipers beside it, and Curlews, Swallows and House Martins overhead. But the lateness of the hour and the onset of rain soon cut short the walk.

Jackie Muscott



Trollius europaeus



HERB PARIS
Paris quadrifolia



LILY-OF-THE-VALLEY
Convallaria majalis

On THURSDAY most people went to FARNHAM GRAVEL PITS

It was an hour's drive from Upper Wharfedale, with a rather confusing last leg on the outskirts of Knaresborough. Nevertheless twenty of us made the trip to this nature reserve of the Harrogate and District Naturalists' Society. We were met by June Atkinson, warden of the site, and Donald and Kathleen Manson, friends of many of us, formerly resident in Edinburgh and now of Harrogate. Fifteen years ago Donald was the ENHS president and he recollected the pleasant memories he had of similar weeks with the Nats away from home.

By the time we had all reached the car park Roger was already photographing at a new location for Bee Orchids *Ophrys apifera*. We then spent a busy hour at the well-equipped hide watching waterfowl and listening to June describing her passion for the site, where winter and summer she spends six days a week recording and working on projects.

The flooded former gravel pits are a major habitat, with birds and dragonflies forming a focus for conservation efforts. A small Common Tern colony has been provided with a nesting platform, beneath which a pair of Little Ringed Plovers also nests. Many common waterfowl, Mute Swan, Mallard, Little Grebe, Tufted Duck and Canada Geese were nesting, as were rarer Great Crested Grebes and Gadwall. Vociferous in defence of territories, Lapwing and Oystercatcher also nest on the pond's edges. On a blustery cool day few Odonata were to be seen despite searching likely spots. Reed Buntings and Sedge warblers were singing around the edges of the pond and in the deeper woodland four other warblers were heard, though some were not seen.

We walked around the other habitats being pointed towards the 'hot' spots by June. Roger's eagle eyes continued to find Bee Orchids as well other plants of a southern distribution such as Yellow-wort *Blackstonia perfoliata* and Agrimony *Agrimonia eupatoria*. A flower meadow on a slope above contained several more usual orchid species and Adder's-tongue Fern *Ophioglossum vulgatum* in some abundance. Lunch back at the hide was enhanced by the well-stocked library of field guides containing all the ones that we wished we had brought with us. Browsing kept us longer than we would have wished and we left with pleasant memories to fulfil our afternoon plans.

Neville Crowther



JANET'S FOSS

After our car trauma of Monday, Lyn, Margaret and I decided that we couldn't face a long drive to Farnham. We thought a gentle walk to Janet's Foss fitted the bill, and perhaps we should have coffee in the village first (we were staying in Malham), just to give the locals some trade !

Feeling a wee bit guilty at our sloth we went into the cafe to be greeted by a table of Nats, enjoying coffee and cakes. A good start to our day. Coffee and chat finished we walked along Gorsdale Beck at snail's pace, enjoying a wealth of flowers and sedges not too familiar to us. We picnicked at Janet's Foss and plowtered around the amazing Gorsdale Scar in the afternoon, before returning to meet the same friends at the same cafe later. A superb day, a lovely place, perfect weather and good company. That's a Nats outing.

Sandra Stewart

STRID WOOD

On the Thursday of our 'Wharfedale week' instead of visiting Farnham gravel pits, I drove down the dale and parked in a large lay-by by the river. On the opposite bank is the ruin called Barden Tower. The tower was built in 1485 as a hunting lodge (Barden means valley of the boar) for Henry, Lord Clifford. It was repaired by Lady Anne Clifford and she lived there from 1657 until her death in 1676 at the age of 86.

Before walking by the river I leaned on the bridge to watch Sand Martins, House Martins, Swallows and Swifts all hunting insects. Once I started to walk along the riverbank it was easy to see many holes in the sandy banks where the Sand Martins were nesting. The House Martins and Swallows favoured the bridge and Barden Tower for their nests.

This was to be a five mile walk, south on the left bank, crossing the river Wharfe near the Cavendish Pavilion and returning on the opposite bank to my starting point. The sun shone all day and it promised to be an easy walk in pleasant surroundings with a few 'sightings' to report at the end of the day. At first the path led through grassland, the river was rippling quietly and the insect-loving birds had easy pickings. Grey Wagtails were dipping up and down on stones and flying out over the water to catch insects, whereas any Dipper I spied was going at great speed and not stopping to catch food.

Over a stile and into the Strid Wood. This is an SSSI. It was designed in the 19th century by the Reverend William Carr as the Victorians were able to visit the countryside and take gentle strolls. They arrived by train, took tea in the Cavendish Pavilion (1880) and perhaps gazed in awe at the river where it was forced through the Strid gorge. The word 'strid' derives from the river being a stride in width at this point; (a giant's stride I would have thought!)

There were nesting boxes fixed to the trees and Pied Flycatchers were taking insects home to their broods. I saw Spotted Flycatcher once or twice flying in and out from a branch catching insects too. I heard Willow Warbler, Chiffchaff and Blackcap but difficult to spy in amongst the leaves mostly of Beech trees.

The Wharfe was way below me as it rushed through the gorge, then the path led to a viewpoint where I could glimpse Button Priory in the distance. Down to a wooden bridge led the Dales Way walk and on the opposite bank stood a visitor centre and the Cavendish Pavilion. Both disappointing - the rangers were out and the ice cream was Nestle!

I returned to my starting point on this bank, seeing Treecreeper and Blue Tits. By the river a Common Sandpiper bobbed, Buzzard mewed above, and on the grassland below Barden Tower was a beautiful Wall Brown Butterfly – and as I went through the stile by the bridge and looked towards the lay-by there – joy of joy – was an ice cream van selling the local Yorkshire ice cream – delicious!

Molly Woolgar

After visiting Farnham Gravel Pits and Bolton Abbey, a small party paid a short visit to Strid Wood. There was a fine specimen of Sulphur Polypore or Chicken of the Woods *Laetiporus sulphureus* growing on a dead Yew *Taxus baccata*, the bright yellow of the fungus contrasting with the dark wood of the tree. But the highlight of the walk was watching a pair of Pied Flycatchers feeding young in one of the nesting boxes which had been erected for them.

Jackie Muscott



PIED FLYCATCHER
at STRID WOOD

FRIDAY - DEPARTURE DAY

GRASSINGTON

On the day of departure some of the Grassington party decided to take a short walk by the river before leaving the town. The vegetation was almost as rich as that at Deepdale, with Quaking Grass *Briza media*, Oat Grasses *Helictotrichon spp*, Salad Burnet *Sanguisorba minor*, Rock-rose *Helianthemum nummularium*, Rough Hawkbit *Leontodon hispidus*, Hairy Rock-cress *Arabis hirsuta* and a large pink patch of Hoary Plantain *Plantago media* flowering beautifully. Birds included Pied and Grey Wagtails, a Mallard with ducklings, and Sand Martins nesting in the bank beneath our feet.

A lane took us back to Grassington and here we found Good-King-Henry *Chenopodium bonus-henricus* and Dewberry *Rubus caesius*, while, just to complete the morning Rue-leaved Saxifrage *Saxifraga tridactylites* turned up on a garden wall.

Jackie Muscott

And on the way home....

Southerscales YNT Reserve had been recommended as an interesting lunch stop on the way to Wharfedale, for people travelling via the M74. As our outward journey had left us with no choice but to sit by a sick car while eating our picnic, we decided to pay a short visit to the reserve on the way home. This is an area of limestone pavements and calcareous grassland, on the north-west slopes of Ingleborough. With not nearly enough time to explore fully and find all the treasures we did manage to see plants of Baneberry *Actaea spicata* in flower. A return visit would be welcome.

Lyn Blades



ANTHERS PINK and SCENTED

ANTHERS PURPLE

HOARY PLANTAIN *Plantago media*
Leaves mainly unstalked

GREATER PLANTAIN *Plantago major*
Leaves stalked

STONE BRAMBLE *Rubus saxatilis* at Fairy Castle and Strid Wood



OBSERVATIONS 2008



JANUARY

One of the wettest on record. 8-9th January - overnight storm-force winds, Force 11 on Beaufort Scale. Storms continued 10th January with rain non-stop and wet snow. Temperature hovering around zero, with ground frozen. 12th January milder, but fog down at Cramond advancing inland.

Quote from *The Scotsman* Wednesday 9th January: 'Gale force winds brought disruption to many parts of the country. Erskine, Tay & Forth Road Bridges all closed. 5 lorries overturned on M74, 30,000 homes without electricity in S W Scotland, Argyll and Dumfriesshire. Ferries and flights cancelled.' (Condensed)

| | | |
|---------|--|----|
| 2nd | Spotted Sandpiper, Kinneil. | BC |
| 8th | Firecrest, West of Kinneil. | BC |
| 11th | Surf Scoter at Ruddons Point. | BC |
| 13th | Aconites in flower, Garscube Crescent. | MR |
| 16th | First yellow Crocus in garden, Purple Crocuses in Murrayfield House park. | MR |
| 19th | At Vogrie Park, someone found a 7-spot Ladybird. A Nuthatch was seen and the bird now breeds in the park. | MR |
| 23rd | Redwings on my back green (Warrender Park Rd), the first I've seen there. | JM |
| 24th | Four Blackcaps among the Birch trees in Davidson's Mains garden. | ES |
| 24-26th | Very cold. Severe gales and heavy rain on 25th and more flooding. | MR |
| 26th | Identified Foxtail Pine in a neighbours' garden. A 5-needle Soft Pine <i>Pinus balfouriana</i> from Western North America. | MR |
| 31st | Little Gull at Musselburgh. | BC |
| | Snow showers and severe gales with a gust of 80 mph recorded on Tay Bridge. | |
| | A stormy end to a miserable month. | MR |

FEBRUARY

| | | |
|------|--|--------|
| 2nd | Shorelark at Skateraw. | BC |
| | Black Redstart, Dunbar. | BC |
| 5th | <i>Iris reticulata</i> and <i>Iris stylosa</i> in flower in my garden. | MR |
| 9th | Queen Bumblebee on Crocus. Sunny morning with temperature 12 ^o C. | MR |
| 10th | Hopetoun House - First Daffodils, Primroses and 2 early Rhododendrons in flower; and Hazel catkins. Much damage by the winter gales to the old Oaks and Beeches. | MR |
| 12th | At the 4.30 pm a dog Fox trotted into the back garden, lifted his leg against a Rowan tree and continued across to the front garden, ignoring me completely. Cheek!! | MR |
| 14th | 5 Hawfinches at Scone Palace. | BC |
| 16th | Woodlark, Scoughall. | BC |
| 18th | White Hares above Hopes Reservoir. | MC, JM |
| 19th | Freezing fog. 2 Robins at bird table. | MR |
| 27th | Frogspawn in pond at house in Craigmarloch, nr Cumbernauld, but it did not develop, probably killed by low temperature 7-9 °C. | MR |
| 28th | Movement of Geese heading North. | MR |
| 29th | Leap Year Day there was yet another heavy rain storm. | MR |

MARCH

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|------|--|-------------|
| 1st | Crossbills on a Pine at Yair Hill, Galashiels | MC, JeM, JM |
| 11th | March gales continue. Set out for Rosyth ferry at 3.15 pm and arrived to find the ship's captain had cancelled the sailing at 2pm because of storm conditions at Zeebrugge. Only the second cancellation in six years! | MR |
| 17th | Cherry trees in full blossom - <i>Prunus atropurpurea</i> (cultivar) - in the garden. | MR |

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| 18th | A pair of Kingfishers by Water of Leith at Warriston. | MP, LB, SS |
| 19th | An even better view of Kingfishers, same area, but this time we had binoculars. | LB,SS |
| 19th | Glaucous Gull at Bavelaw. | BC |
| 20th | Water Pipit, Musselburgh. | BC |
| 21st | Queen Bumblebee looking for a nest hole about an hour before a snowfall. A very cold Easter. | MR |
| 22nd | The Lesser Blackback Gulls have returned. They are squabbling with the Herring Gulls. | MR |
| 26th | Great Spotted Woodpecker drumming in Ravelston woods. Heard several times in following weeks. | MR |
| APRIL | | |
| 2nd | 2 Comma Butterflies at Swanston. | AG |
| 3rd | Cow Parsley <i>Anthriscus sylvestris</i> and Red Dead Nettle <i>Lamium purpureum</i> in flower at Murrayfield House. | MR |
| 4th | Peacock Butterfly in garden. | MR |
| 7th | Nuthatch in Hopetoun House grounds. Thrush singing, Chiffchaff tuning up, its call not fully developed. Wood Anemone <i>Anemone nemorosa</i> and Dog's-tooth Violet <i>Erythronium</i> flowering; lots of Primroses and Daffodils in their thousands, a magnificent display. Much storm damage among the old Beech trees, including one with <i>Ganaderma</i> fungus growing all the way up its rotten split trunk No. 0263. Squirrels attacking Horse Chestnut buds. First flowers of Cherry Laurel open. | MR |
| 13th | 2 Swallows at Hopetoun House. | MR |
| 20th | Heard a strange birdcall in Lauriston Castle grounds. It was a female Kestrel at the top of a Chestnut tree calling to her mate. The male flew in, mated briefly, flew off, circled round then returned to repeat the performance. A singing Blackcap in Murrayfield House grounds. Cowslips in flower at Laurieston Castle, carpets of Daises and a beautiful display of Daffodils. | MR |
| 24th | I was amused to see a little bird pecking furiously at its reflection in the wing mirror of a parked car. It could have been a Great Tit. | MR |
| 26th | First butterflies - Comma, Peacock, Small Tortoiseshell - near Abercorn. | JM |
| 26th | Peacock Butterfly in garden, several Bumblebees and 7-spot Ladybirds. | MR |
| MAY | | |
| 1st | White flowers of Pink Purslane <i>Claytonia sibirica</i> in Murrayfield House grounds. | MR |
| 8th | A Holly Blue Butterfly sitting on a stone in Blackford Pond. | JM |
| 13th | Small Tortoiseshell Butterfly on Green Alkanet <i>Pentaglottis sempervirens</i> flowers in back lane at Murrayfield. | MR |
| 16th | Orange Tip Butterfly at Murrayfield, same place. | MR |
| | 2 Drake Garganey at Loch Gelly. | BC |
| 21st | Nats evening walk along the Trinity walkway. <i>Mitrophora semilibera</i> (a morel-type fungus). Although uncommon this fungus has now been found several times in this location. It is tall with a semi-free cap and at first sight could be mistaken for the common Stinkhorn <i>Phallus impudicus</i> , which was also found nearby. | ES |
| 28th | Red-footed Falcon, River Almond Aqueduct, East Calder. | BC |
| JUNE | | |
| 1st | Manna Ash <i>Fraxinus ornus</i> trees flowering in Murrayfield House grounds. | MR |
| 4 th | Badger in Davidson's Mains Park. | ES |
| 15th | Chiffchaff singing, old railway line, Ravelston area. I was finally able to identify a 'puzzle' tree or large shrub growing in a garden in the Murrayfield area. It is the Yellow Kowhai <i>Sophora tetraptera</i> tree (Leguminosae), native of North Island, New Zealand. Its long-looking fruits resemble corky strings of seeds with 5-8 seeds. Seed was brought back by Sir Joseph Banks in 1771 and introduced to European gardens. There is a picture of it on Plate 129 of the book <i>Field Flowers of the World</i> by Barbara Everard and Brian D Morley. | |

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| | I have also seen a lovely <i>Eucryphia X nymansensis</i> which has large white flowers, two or three lovely Magnolias and Eucalyptus trees, though I cannot imagine why anyone would like a Gum tree in their garden! | MR |
| 16th | Ruff at Aberlady. | BC |
| 18th | Volvariella in Bristo Square gardens. | ES |
| 20th | Common Rosefinch, Tyndrum. | BC |
| 24th | 6 Broad-leaved Helleborine <i>Epipactis helleborine</i> in Davidson's Mains garden. | ES |
| 28th | Mountain Ringlet butterfly at Creag na Caillich cliffs, Tarmachan (with BSS). | JM |
| 29th | Another at Keltneyburn. Also a family of Siskins feeding on peanuts nearby. | MC, JM, SS |
| JULY | | |
| 4th | Little Ringed Plover at Musselburgh. | BC |
| 8th | Baby Swallows being fed in the trees, Salmonberries in the hedgerow between Marchbanks and Eastrigg near Red Moss. | JM |
| 14th | Juvenile members of Blue Tit family being taught how to use the bird feeders in my garden. During the afternoon I noticed Swifts overhead possibly on migration. They arrive late and leave early. | MR |
| 18th | A Crossbill at Harlaw. | AG |
| 19th | Nats outing to Glenholm valley. A very boring-looking fungus on dead, standing mature Rowan trees turned out to be <i>Lentinellus vulpinus</i> . (Red data list, identified by R.Watling) | ES |
| 23rd | The warmest day of the year - 23 ^o C in Edinburgh. | MR |
| | Lots of Common Blue, Ringlet and Small Heath Butterflies at Bonaly Reservoir. | AG |
| 24th | About 1.30 pm I was eating lunch in the garden when I looked up and saw a Fox about 2 metres away from me. It was in poor condition with a rough coat, very thin especially on the flanks, its tail thin and bedraggled. It was obviously very hungry. It came closer and we looked at each other. I decided not to feed it. After 10 minutes or so it wandered off whence it came, nibbling dry scraps of cheese en route, and up the path into Gardiner Road. | MR |
| | Common Blue, Ringlet and Meadow Brown Butterflies and a Blue-tailed Damselfly at St. Abb's. | AG |
| 25th | Painted Lady and Small Tortoiseshell Butterflies at Carlops. | AG |
| AUGUST | | |
| | A very wet month - Heavy rain 11-13th August | MR |
| 1st | Painted Lady, Peacock and Red Admiral Butterflies at Aberlady. | AG |
| 4th | Dark Green Fritillary at Tentsmuir. | AG |
| 9th | Nats outing to Almondell. <i>Melanotus horizontalis</i> was found in great profusion along a large tree trunk which was bridging the flow of water which feeds the canal. This fungus is thought to be becoming more common. (identified by R.Watling) | ES |
| 12th | Yellow Underwing Moth hiding under Campanula. I found 2 dead Frogs in the borders. | MR |
| 13th | Little Egret at Aberlady. | BC |
| 14th | 2 Red Admirals at Gullane. | AG |
| | A flock of Long-tailed Tits in the Apple tree - too numerous to count. | MR |
| 17th | Small Copper at Dalmeny. | AG |
| 19th | Yellowhammer at Lothianburn. | AG |
| 24th | Peacock Butterfly on Borage flowers in garden and a Green-veined White. | MR |
| | Holly Blue Butterfly on Ivy, Trinity garden. | LB |
| 28th | My neighbour had a Comma Butterfly on his Buddleia. While working in the garden I hear House Martins and Swallows overhead on migration. | MR |
| | Hobby at Hound Point. | BC |



SEPTEMBER

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| 1st | Hobby at Hound Point. | BC |
| 2nd | High Wood, Lammermuirs, dead and half-dead Beeches covered with Porcelain Fungus <i>Oudemansiella mucida</i> . | JM |
| 3rd | Mount Stuart grounds, Isle of Bute. I found a Knopper Gall under an Oak; global warming has brought the Gall Wasp <i>Andricus quercuscalis</i> further north lately. Galls are now very common on Oak trees at this time of year. A happy find was Chanterelles under a Beech and some Wood Blewits. | MR |
| 6th | <i>Hohenbuehelia mastrucata</i> a Red Data List fungus found on the Heriot Watt outing, by our youngest member, Fraser Donachie, age 12. The specimen now resides in the herbarium of The Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh. | ES |
| 10th | Davidson's Mains garden. Several specimens of <i>Lepiota aspera</i> under a pear tree. | ES |
| 13th | 4 Black Terns at Hound Point. | BC |
| 14th | Alpine plants and <i>Solarina crocea</i> , an alpine comma lichen on Feshie river shingle. | MC, JeM, JM |
| 19th | Wryneck, Barns Ness. | BC |
| | First skein of winter Geese overhead in late afternoon. | MR |
| 19-20th | At Murrayfield House I found a prolific fungal flora of Lawyers' Wig <i>Coprinus comatus</i> in poor mossy grass. I picked 20 or so. I made a creamy sauce which I enjoyed with toast, then with a lightly poached egg and finally with fish. I went for a second gathering, they were so good, but the gardener had cut the grass and they had all gone! | MR |
| 20th | Greater Sandplover. | BC |
| 20th | Spring Vetch <i>Vicia lathyroides</i> in flower at Cove. | RH, JM |
| 24th | At Hopetoun House I have never seen the grounds so waterlogged in more than twenty years. To make matters worse the soft ground had been churned up by heavy machines used to remove the fallen trees. A Buzzard flew overhead and one bird lifted off from a conifer on Sea Walk Trail. | |
| 25th | Large flock of Geese flying south. Much movement of Geese noticed in the next few days. | MR |
| 28th | Two large skeins of Pinkfoot Geese overhead about 9.15 am. It was cold and sunny. | MR |
| 28th | <i>Volvariella reidii</i> in Dean Cemetery. (Red Data list, identified by R.Watling). This fungus had a glistening white slimy cap. There was also a large patch of Orange Peel fungus <i>Aleuria aurantia</i> . | DA, ES |

OCTOBER

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|---------|--|----|
| 5th | Peacock Butterfly in garden. | MR |
| 19-26th | Strong equinoctial gales and heavy rain. Most of my apples have been blown down. | MR |
| 30th | Spoonbill at Belhaven Bay. | BC |

NOVEMBER

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|------|---|----|
| 3rd | A Snipe landed about 4 feet from me in my allotment at West Mains and, when I drew in my breath, zig-zagged off at high speed. | MC |
| 5th | Pallas's Warbler at Torness. | BC |
| 15th | Black-necked Grebe, Kilspindie. | BC |
| 18th | Goldfinch in Davidson's Mains garden. | ES |
| 22nd | Very cold North-west winds sent temperatures plummeting, with snow overnight. A small flock of Scandinavian Thrushes, Fieldfares, Redwings and Blackbirds plundered the Rowan berries and apples in the garden. | MR |
| 29th | Redwing in Davidson's Mains garden. | ES |



DECEMBER

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|------|--|----|
| | A Heron was standing stock still on the North bank of the water of Leith, just past Saughton Prison. | RC |
| 19th | Treecreeper on Cedar in Trinity garden. The first I have seen. | LB |

OBSERVERS

| | | | | | |
|-----|----------------|----|----------------|----|------------------|
| DA | David Adamson | LB | Lyn Blades | RC | Roddy Clark |
| MC | Mary Clarkson | BC | Bill Clunie | NC | Neville Crowther |
| AG | Alison Gemmell | EG | Ena Gillespie | RH | Roger Holme |
| JeM | Jean Murray | JM | Jackie Muscott | MP | Margaret Perry |
| MR | Mary Robertson | ES | Eunice Smith | SS | Sandra Stewart |



OBSERVATIONS FROM MY GARDEN IN GALASHIELS

Nuthatches around all last winter and spring, and reappeared on day two after the bird table was set up again in October - I've seen both together earlier than last year. One chose peanuts, the other suet balls.

Long-tailed Tits seem to be staying around this year, instead of just passing through. They visit frequently. I've had Great Spotted Woodpeckers several times, one of each sex, but not together. I don't usually see them unless the weather is really bad.

Not a good year for the Bats, which use the wooden cladding below the extension roof as a nursery. There were very few, if the droppings were anything to go by! They came late, and left early.

Jean Murray

NATURE RED in TOOTH and CLAW

On the 8th March one of the household in Currie observed a Sparrowhawk preying on a Pigeon. The raptor was observed gorging itself on the bird that it had killed. It was a vigorous ripping out of the remaining feathers action and then a ripping and tearing of the flesh. The poor bird seems to have put up quite a defence before its death as there were feathers scattered at two places on the lawn where the bird of prey had earlier been seen eating it. To the human observer it was nature in all its inevitable brutality, unavoidable because of the predator's source of nourishment and adaptations required to obtain that, plus the two birds' niches in nature's web of life - all dictated by the course of evolution.

This sighting was reported to me by the head of that household. The person who saw the kill is interested in birds and identified the Sparrowhawk from a guide book to birds. He also read that the Sparrowhawk kills its prey by breaking its neck. The garden lies under a regular Sparrowhawk flight path.

Roddy Clark



EP

WINTER TALKS 2008

23rd January

SUB-ARCTIC WILLOWS IN SCOTLAND

Jeremy Milne

Dr Jeremy Milne gave a presentation on the diverse research that has been undertaken by the Sub-arctic Willow Scrub Research Project. Sub-arctic willow scrub is an endangered habitat that exists in isolated, fragmented populations, mainly in the Scottish Highlands. Dr Milne spotlighted some of the work being done by himself and the other members of the research team. A taxonomic study of Willow species and hybrids has helped to determine migration patterns of these populations. Genetic structure has also been studied to determine patterns of reproduction and seed dispersal. Field experiments considered the effects of animals grazing upon the interaction of plants, seeds and insects. Dr. Milne's own area of specialty is the impact of ectomycorrhizal fungi upon the diversity and health of the willow population. This wide range of research topics is providing valuable data that will inform conservation of the sub-arctic Willow populations in Scotland. Above all Dr. Milne revealed that in the background of this ambitious research project was a dedicated team of people with a wide range of professional interests and skills.

Julia Macintosh

25th February

MICRORRHIZAL FUNGI

Philip Mason

26th March

BATS

Anne Youngman

February and March talks were both very interesting. No reports were prepared.

24th September

DUMBARNIE LINKS, FIFE

Gordon Corbet

In 1999 the Scottish Wildlife Trust acquired a small part, only seven hectares, of Dumbarnie Links, backing Largo Bay on the south coast of Fife. Since then, over 1,530 species have been recorded on the reserve, in spite of very limited diversity of habitat – primarily calcareous dune grassland, with no permanent wetland. Amongst the 200 species of vascular plants, the conspicuous ones are the characteristic flowers of calcareous dunes – Vipers Bugloss, Cowslip, Purple Milkvetch, Lesser Hawkbit and many more. Of the animals the Rabbits, Skylarks and Stonechats are noticeable. But these are grossly outnumbered by the invertebrates, with 950 species of insects recorded so far, including almost 400 species of dipterous flies, and many more awaiting identification. The fungi, with 50 species, are very under-recorded. The objective has not just been to compile a list of names, but to establish the links in the intricate food webs: what eats what, what is eaten by what, what pollinates what etc. There's more than a life-time's work there. If you want biodiversity, there's no need to go up the Amazon – with a basic microscope the whole diversity of life, from the beautiful to the bizarre and the bewildering, is there on your doorstep.

Gordon Corbet

22nd October

DARWIN AND HIS FRIENDS Jackie Muscott

Charles Darwin was born in February 1809 and his *Origin of Species* published in November 1859. Important figures in his life included:

Robert Darwin, his father, who paid for his voyage on the *Beagle*, and continued to provide support and advice.
John Stevens Henslow, Professor of Botany at Cambridge, who befriended Darwin and put his name forward for the *Beagle*. He stored the specimens Darwin sent back and introduced him to other scientists.
Charles Lyell, author of *Principles of Geology*. Darwin's observations on the voyage supported Lyell's views. They met on his return and became lifelong friends.
Joseph Hooker, who succeeded his father William Hooker as Director of Kew. He was Darwin's closest friend, and the first to accept his evolutionary ideas.
Thomas Huxley, Darwin's 'bulldog'. Burningly ambitious, his support of Darwin was fuelled by hatred of Richard Owen, the most important opponent.
Alfred Russell Wallace, a professional collector in the Malay archipelago, who developed similar ideas on evolution and 'outed' Darwin. His 1858 paper and an essay of Darwin's from 1844 were read together at the Linnaean Society in June 1858. A modest man who acknowledged Darwin's priority.
Darwin and his younger friends all shared the experience of collecting round the world - and the loss of beloved children. Darwin was a 'gentleman scientist', Hooker and Huxley among the first professionals.

Jackie Muscott

Dr Crinan Alexander, taxonomist at the Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh delivered a talk in honour of the recent tercentenary celebrating the birth of Carl Linnaeus. We learned about Linnaeus's early travels as a young man, including a visit to Lapland which inspired his personal interest in the Sami culture, and we admired the portrait of Linnaeus in traditional Sami costume. Dr Alexander described the enthusiasm and thoroughness with which Linnaeus tackled his ambitious project of classification. His system of taxonomy rested on the visual identification of plant parts, including stamens and pistils, a system which generated some controversy - not everyone liked the idea of plant sexuality! One opponent in particular was Johann Sigesbeck who criticised the Linnaean system bitterly as offensive and unchaste. Dr Alexander described with some amusement the playful revenge Linnaeus took by choosing the name *Sigesbeckia* for a common weed. He also shared an anecdote concerning an unlabelled packet containing seeds of *Sigesbeckia*, upon which Linnaeus had scribbled the words *Cuculus ingratulus* (the ungrateful cuckoo). One of his students mistakenly included this packet in a group of specimens that eventually made their way to Sigesbeck himself, who was furious when he planted the seeds and discovered that the insult on the packet had been a reference to himself. Linnaeus corresponded with a wide range of colleagues across Europe and the globe, from whom he obtained plant specimens and seeds. One of these was Dr Hope of Edinburgh's Royal Botanic Garden, who commemorated Linnaeus posthumously with the monument that still stands in the Botanic.

Julia Macintosh



THE SOCIETY'S EQUIPMENT

In addition to books held in the Library, the Society has various other items which can be borrowed by members for their private use, including LP records of birdsong with accompanying booklet, and a recording of Grasshoppers.

Needless to say, members will be responsible for the care of books and equipment on loan.

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| Telescope: | A Bushnell Spacemaster of 20x - 40x magnification, in carrying case and a car window-mount for in-car use. Apply to Grace Jamieson, Tel: 0131 453 3434 |
| Microscopes: | High and low power microscopes. Apply to Mary Clarkson Tel: 0131 667 3815 |
| pH Meter: | Apply to Elizabeth Farquharson Tel. 0131 447 1994 |
| Mammal Traps: | Twenty-four small-mammal traps. Apply to Elizabeth Farquharson Tel: 0131 447 1994 |
| Photographic slides: | A comprehensive slide collection left to the Society by Janet Raeburn. The subjects are mostly botanical but also include birds, mammals, butterflies and Scottish scenery. They are kept in the Library. |
| Bawsinch Key: | The Bawsinch Nature Reserve at Duddingston is managed by the SWT, who allow the Society to hold a key for members. Apply to Joanie McNaughton, Secy Tel.: 0131 477 0270 |
| Slide Projector: | Apply to Elizabeth Farquharson (Tel. 0131 447 1994) |
| Laptop Computer and Data Projector | Apply to Joanie McNaughton,, Secretary Tel.: 0131 477 0270 |

THE SOCIETY'S LIBRARY

I usually attend the winter indoor meetings and bring along a small selection of books to show and lend. Any member wishing to borrow a particular volume should ring me 7 days prior to the meeting. At other times, or if a book is required urgently, please make contact and we may be able to work something out. Members wishing a copy of the catalogue can ring me for one - cost : £1.50 + Postage. (or free by e-mail).

John Watson Librarian Tel: 0131 449 3693 ; e-mail : watsons@currie95.fsnet.co.uk

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We are sure that you will all agree that the photographs are lovely. Many thanks to all who contributed them. We had so many and we were only able to include a few, as follows:

PAGE 1

| | |
|---|------------------|
| Lunchtime, Inchcailloch | Roddy Clark |
| Malham | Dorothy Stuart |
| After lunch, Tynningame | Roddy Clark |
| Examining Angular Solomon's Seal, Yorkshire | Neville Crowther |
| Meeting at Almondell | John Watson |
| Angular Solomon's Seal | Roger Holme |

PAGE 2

| | |
|-----------------------------|------------------|
| Malham Cove | Neville Crowther |
| Primula farinosa, Yorkshire | Roger Holme |
| Fairy Castle | Neville Crowther |
| Water Avens, Yorkshire | Roger Holme |
| Little Owl, Yorkshire | Neville Crowther |

PAGE 3

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|--------------------------------------|------------------|
| Swans at Caerlaverock | Margaret Perry |
| Scarlet Elf Cup | Margaret Perry |
| Scarlet Elf Cup | John Watson |
| Swan with Transmitter | Neville Crowther |
| Wigeon Drake | Neville Crowther |
| Astragalus danicus, Tulach Hill | Roger Holme |
| Porcelain Fungus | John Watson |
| Fruiting Lords and Ladies | John Watson |
| Purple Toothwort | John Watson |
| Speckled Wood | Neville Crowther |
| Northern Brown Argus | Neville Crowther |
| Beautiful Golden Y Moth, Tulach Hill | Roger Holme |

PAGE 4

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|------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Scarce Silver Y Moth | Roger Holme |
| Bee Orchid | Neville Crowther |
| Brown Silver Line Moth | Joanie McNaughton |
| Puffins | Joanie McNaughton |
| Song Thrush | Neville Crowther |
| Heron | Neville Crowther |
| Tree Mallow | John Hunt |
| Great Tussock Grass | Jackie Muscott |
| Phaeolepiota aurea } | |
| Paxillus obscurusporus } | |
| Hydnum rufescens } | |
| Strobilomyces strobilaceus } | Photographs from Liz Holden, |
| Cortinarius cinnabarinus } | Geoffrey Kibby and Antony Kibby |

Well over 40 people write articles, do outing reports and send us observations. We are very grateful for these contributions to the Journal.

We are very fortunate in having had two accomplished artists. Jackie has given us many lovely drawings over the years. She usually includes a very small JM on hers.

If you wish, you can e-mail your contribution to journal@edinburghnaturalhistorysociety.org.uk If you do not have e-mail, you can send e-mails from any Library, and there is usually a Librarian on hand to help you.

